

**Knowledge, *Chivanhu* and Struggles for Survival in Conflict-Torn Manicaland,  
Zimbabwe**

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the  
Anthropology Section of the School of African Studies, Gender and Linguistics  
University of Cape Town

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**February 2014**

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Signed\_\_\_\_\_

Artwell Nhemachena

Date\_\_14 February 2014\_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

This dissertation explored how villagers in a district of Manicaland province of Zimbabwe deeply affected by violence and want survived the violence that has characterised Zimbabwe's most recent politics (from the year 2000). Marked by invasions of white owned farms, by interparty violence, interpersonal violence as well as witchcraft related violence, the period posed immense challenges to life and limb. Yet institutions of welfare, security and law enforcement were not equal to the task of ensuring survival necessitating questions about the sufficiency of "modern" institutions of law enforcement, media, politics, economy and health in guaranteeing survival in moments of want. How villagers survived the contexts of immense want, acute shortages of cash, basic commodities, formal unemployment levels of over ninety percent, hyperinflation (which in 2008 reached over 231 million percent) and direct physical violence is cause for wonder for scholarship of everyday life.

Based on ethnographic data gathered over a period of fifteen months, the dissertation interrogates how villagers survived these challenges. Unlike much scholarship on Zimbabwe's 'crisis', it takes seriously matters of knowing and ontology with respect to *chivanhu* (erroneously understood as "tradition" of the Shona people). The thesis found that *chivanhu* which is a mode of engagement that encapsulates villagers everyday life is not invariably steeped in dichotomies such as those that polarised Zimbabwe. Villagers navigated between *chivanhu* and "modernity" without necessarily opposing the two modes of engagements. For this reason villagers relied on *mukwerera*, or rain petitioning but they also relied on meteorological forecasts, they relied on divination, prophecy and dreams without necessarily opposing these to other modes of acquiring information at a distance such as mobile phones and radios and television sets. They relied on *chivanhu* modes of economic engagements without necessarily opposing them to "modern" economic life. Marginalised and subalternised during the colonialism, with its emphasis on "modern" epistemologies, *chivanhu* has not been much recognised despite the revalorisation of "indigenous" knowledge in other realms of life. This dissertation explores how aspects of *chivanhu* as *kukumbira* (to request or petition), *mbepo/mweya* (wind/air) and *ruṣivo* (knowledge), *ukama* (relationships of interdependence), *kutenda* (to thank) as well as sensing (*kunṣwa*)

played out in the modes of survival among the villagers. The dissertation examines the interconnections and interdependences of different kinds of entities in the cosmos, demonstrating how they enable scholars to rethink both violence and the rigid polarisations that underpinned violence in Zimbabwe. Engaging scholarship arguing for decolonisation of subalternised knowledge and also critically engaging scholarship on relational ontologies, the dissertation explores how scholarship might be enriched by ideas and practices of *chivanhu* and vice versa.

## Acknowledgements

My most sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors Associate Professor Lesley Green (University of Cape Town) and Professor Fiona C Ross (University of Cape Town) for all the intellectual, moral and emotional support particularly during a difficult research and writing process such as one looking at and involving violence. I could not have survived the violence of the research process and the processes of unpacking things and prying myself outside the box of the taken for granted as part of the rubrics of analytical. I am equally grateful for your tireless and fruitful efforts in securing funding for this dissertation. To the rest of the staff members in the Anthropology Section of the School of African Studies, Gender and Linguistics, I say thank you for the support you gave in various other ways.

I would like to thank the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the Eric Abrahams International/Refugee Scholarship for funding this dissertation. I would also want to thank the staff in the University of Cape Town Postgraduate Funding Office who handled and disbursed the funding. In particular, I would thank Chantel Reed for her patience with the impatience I often brought to her office when disbursements were due. To the Faculty of Humanities staff, particularly Anne Wegerhof, I say thank you for always serving me with a smile during the years of toil. Coming from a context of violence and writing about violence was eased by your efficiency and the smiles that always reminded me that there are other worlds, of smiles and efficient dispensations, outside the worlds of violence.

My thanks also go to the villagers in Buhera and fellow church members with whom I have journeyed and from whom I have learnt a lot over the time.

To my fellow Joshua Ben Cohen, with whom I have travelled all the way from the start of the study and from whom I have learnt a lot also, I say thank you. The walks we had up the Table Mountain, the walk we had in the forests on the slopes of the Table Mountain, the visits to the sea and the stories we shared all contributed to my latent curriculum.

My thanks also go to my wife Esther Dhakwa-Nhemachena for all her support to me and to our children

during the journey of which intellectual, emotional and financial exactions I initially underestimated. I say thank you for all the support; you have always been a wife and a half.

## Glossary of Terms

**Chidhoma**-conventionally witch familiar

**Chikwambo**-a *mweya*/"spirit" of a deceased person that is raised to generate a sorcerer's familiar or things he/she uses to harm others at a distance

**Chinhu** (plural *zvinhu*)-a thing as distinct from *munhu* (human being/person)

**Chipotswa**-a form of witchcraft/sorcery where a witch places poisons on the victim's path so that when he/she steps on it it enters the body

**Chishona/Shona/Chivanhu**-vernacular language

**Chivanhu**-ways of life erroneously understood as traditions

**Denga**-Heaven

**Guta**-city

**Haana kukwana**-he/she is not enough in reference to behaviour considered wayward

**Hama yevahera**-relative of the *bera* clan

**Hama**-a relative

**Hapana munhu**-literally there is no person in reference to one deemed to lack *unhu*

**Haya** - a rain bird which survives on water that collects in tree trunks. With the approach of the rains, the haya bird sings. In English it is known as a cuckoo bird. It's a member of the cuculidae family of birds

**Hungwe**- a bird known as fish eagle. It is a *haliaeetus* in Latin

**Kutenda**-to thank or to be thankful

**Madendera** - huge ground hornbill birds with black and red strips which also sing with the approach of the rains

**Mbuya**-a honorific term used to refer to female healers

**Mhondoro** - clan ancestor responsible for rain

**Muchakata** - known as *parinaricuratellifolia*, it is the tree considered to be the village of ancestors under which people gather to petition for rain.

(v)



**Mukombe** - gourd used to share beer during the petitioning for rain

**Homwe yevahera**-pocket of the *hera* clan

**Imhuka dzevanhu**-they are mere animals used to distinguish between a person with *unhu* and one without *unhu*

**Kukumbira mvura**-to request/petition for rain

**Kuona**-to see

**Kuonesa**-to make one see

**Kupfekwa nemweya**-literally to be worn by the air/spirits/to be possessed and used as a vehicle by “spirits”

**Kurira nendimi**- literally to sound with the tongue/ understood conventionally as speaking in tongues

**Kusakwana**-to be wayward/to be not enough

**Kusatenda huroyi**-to fail to thank is witchcraft

**Kusundira**-to push in reference to sending bad wind/air/ spirits to others

**Kusunungura mweya**-literally to free the air in reference to freeing one’s “spirit” or soul

**Kutenda**-to thank

**Madzimudzangara**-“spiritual” manifestations

**Mashavi**-“spirits” from outside one’s clan ancestral circle/including “spirits” of foreigners

**Masvikiro edzinza**-mediums of the clan

**Masvikiro enyika**-mediums of the country

**Masvikiro enzvimbo**-mediums of the area

**Mhepo**-wind also deemed to manifest as “spirits/deities”

**Mhuka yesango**-literary animal of the forest/conventionally understood as wild animal

**Midzi**-roots

**Mishonga**-medicines/herbs

**Munamoto**- prayers

**Munhu**- a human being but often refers to a human being with *unhu*/ethics

**Mushonga**-singular of *mishonga*

**Musikavanhu**-God as deemed to have created human beings

**Musiki**-creator

**Muuya**-air/spirit in Tonga of northwest Zimbabwe

**Mwari**-God

**Mweya**-air also deemed to manifest as “spirits/deities”

**N’anga**-healers

**Ngozi**-the deceased considered to return to avenge

**Njanja**-one of the clans living in Buhera

**Nyadenga**-God as deemed to stay in Heaven

**Nzvimbo dzinoera**-sacred places

**Pungwe**- Political gatherings throughout the night

**Ruzivo**-Knowledge

**Sadza**-thick porridge which is the staple diet

**Samatenga**-God as deemed to own the Heaven

**Tsika**-morals

**Ukama**-a mode of relating

**Unhu**-ethics in *chivanhu*

**Uroyi**-acts of bewitching

**Vanhu**-human beings but often also refers to human beings considered to have *unhu*

**Varatidzwi**-church members who are deemed to be shown otherwise hidden things

**Varoti**-dreamers

**Varoyi/umthakathi**-conventionally understood as witches

**Wekumusorosoro**-God as deemed to rank highest

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## Introduction and Background

Such were the difficulties of living in Zimbabwe that between 2000 and 2009 the rate of inflation rose until it reached 231 million percent in 2008, over 4000 people died of cholera and the rate of formal unemployment reached over 90% in a context of acute food, cash and water shortages that attended the economic meltdown within the country (*The Zimbabwean* Sunday 22 March 2009, Tarisayi 2009, Coltart 2008, Gasela 2009). Statistics produced during the period indicated that about 40 000 allegations of violations of human rights occurred including torture, arson, murder, rape, assault, threats, confiscation of property including farms and livestock belonging to opponents (Reeler et al 2009, Reeler n.d, Lovemore 2003). In this context Zimbabweans suffered multiple forms of violence including direct physical violence in which victims were often abducted at night and marched to bases of militia or the military where they were tortured using sjamboks, rifle butts, log, sticks, booted feet, blunt objects, rubber hosing, tire strips, bicycle chains, electric cables, electricity, water and other fluids used for suffocation. Approximately 10 000 homes were destroyed and 20 000 people were displaced by the violence (Reeler n.d, Masunungure 2009). These statistics were contested between the various parties, that is, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the Zimbabwe African National Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). In similar ways statistics and information particularly during conflicts are contested in scholarship in which others argue that during conflicts there is a lot of deliberate disinformation as well as challenges in reaching out some areas to verify the information (Pottier et al 2002) while some argue that during conflicts some people create moral panics by deliberately generating frightening statistics in order to psychologically prepare them for the changes they desire (Ben-Yehuda 1985). Notwithstanding these arguments, the statistics give a picture of the context.

Zimbabwe's economic decline and political violence was attributed to multiple origins including structural adjustment programmes introduced, at the behest of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, a decade earlier than the crisis resulting in deindustrialisation. The challenges were also attributed to the legacy of colonial rule, and to African nationalist politics (Raftopoulos 2009). There was confrontation over land and property rights and over the historical meaning of nationalism and constitutional questions. There was the restructuring of the government in more authoritarian forms in the name of launching anti-imperialist

struggles in Zimbabwe. Other scholars have alleged that the Zimbabwean crisis emerged due to the government's mismanagement of the economy, to the controversial fast track land reforms in which farms belonging to white farmers were expropriated, to violations of property rights and to executive lawlessness (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006). Yet others have attributed the crisis to neoliberalism and incomplete decolonisation (Moyo 2008). Moyo has argued that the escalation since 2000 of the land and political struggles reflects growing calls for land reforms and reparations on the continent. For Moyo (2008), 'the land question' has become internationalised not least because it mirrors incomplete decolonisation processes in ex-settler colonies but also because global finance capital is increasingly entangled in conflicts over land, minerals, and natural resources in Africa's rich enclaves. Yet other scholars have highlighted efforts to marginalise the country from international affairs and the ways in which President Mugabe skilfully used Pan-Africanism and nationalist discourses to frame the situation as one of ongoing colonial injustice -- a crisis resulting from international interference including sanctions by the United States of America, Britain and the rest of the European Union, and the imposition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's poorly designed economic reform policies. The crises have also been attributed to the failure by the United Kingdom to support the needed land reforms (McCandless 2011) that the United Kingdom initially promised to fund at the time the independence of Zimbabwe was negotiated in 1979 at Lancaster House (Gono 2008). These issues are understood by scholars to have contributed to the generation of multiple crises namely a governance crisis, a leadership crisis, an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis and a land crisis (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006). The period was marked by an unprecedented fall in Gross Domestic Product, by the breakdown of law and order, by international isolation as well as conflicts between blacks and whites, rich and poor and between the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front Party (ZANU PF). It was also marked by acrimony between the ZANU PF led government and the European governments some of which were deemed by the Zimbabwe government to be set on blocking its land redistribution exercise. But there were also recurrent droughts that afflicted the country during the period (Muzondidya 2009), which saw agricultural as well as industrial production tumbling resulting in massive inflation, unemployment and shortages of basic commodities on the

market.

How Zimbabweans survived in such a context raises fundamental questions not only about governance but also about everyday life in the context where as Chitando and Manyonganise (2011) noted Zimbabweans, the region, the continent and the broader international community could not readily find institutional solutions. The parallels in the modes of violence perpetrated by the colonial and postcolonial governments (see for instance Weitzer 1984, Zaffiro 2002) suggest the need not to focus narrowly on conventional formal mechanisms in rethinking violence and survival. The fact that during both the colonial and post-colonial periods the police force and the military were often used to perpetrate violence and repression speaks to the inadequacy of relying on formal mechanisms in the matters of surviving violence and repression. That the law was often used to repress and legitimise violence equally indicates the inadequacy of focusing narrowly on the law as a guarantor of survival. In Zimbabwe for instance the Law and Order Maintenance Act of 1960 enacted by the colonial Government was retained by the postcolonial government (until 2002 when it was replaced by the Public Order and Security Act or POSA) that used it to repress citizens and civil society organisations (see Weitzer 1984). This underlines the insufficiency of the notion of the social contract and formal institutions in guaranteeing security for citizens. That in 1964 and 1965 the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation became a personal mouth-piece of the then-Prime Minister Ian Smith when, during the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, he sought to design an information sector amenable to his control and supporting his policies (Zaffiro 2002) indicates ways in which institutions are often usurped to serve the interests of a few. The recourse to violence and repression as modes of governance in Africa (see for instance Mbembe 2000, 2006) has entailed dynamics of radical predation, and logics of cruelty and excess: dynamics that have effaced the distinction between war time and political time.

Such dynamics of polarisation and predation in politics necessitate thinking through matters of order and security that are presumed in the idea of the social contract. Although Hobbes and Bodin assumed that the state had territorial circumscription, political unification with one power centre and a single supreme authority called the sovereign (see for instance Gumplova 2011); the situation in Zimbabwe could not be understood merely in terms of political unification but also in terms of polarisation on premises of race, political party



affiliation and economic inequalities. Although Hobbes presumed that the sovereign was the supreme power in society serving to prevent individuals from harming others and to keep the commonwealth functioning smoothly, the sovereign resort to violence, repression and expropriation indicates political predation or rather a form of enforcing order that was premised on depredation of some citizens rather than on prevention of harm. Thus Hobbes' presumption that an absolute and indivisible power in the form of the sovereign in the social contract provided the means to overcome anarchy, civil war and the plurality of authorities assumes the status of a hypothesis in situations where electoral democracy is contested and the elections result in violence, repression and anarchy.

Though such violence has been understood to speak to the weaknesses of the sovereign, other scholars have traced violence to outside the jurisdictions of the sovereign. Mbembe (2000: 284) for instance traces some violence to the decomposition of the state in Africa, his argument being that states were decomposed with the adoption of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes and that they became prone to violence as a result of their decomposition. Linking violence to struggles to exploit raw material Mbembe argues that in the regions on the margins of the world's major contemporary technological transformations, the deconstruction of existing territorial frameworks goes hand in hand with the establishment of an economy of coercion whose objective is to destroy superfluous populations and to exploit raw materials. The profitability of this kind of exploitation for Mbembe requires the exit of the state, its emasculation, and its replacement by fragmented forms of sovereignty. So while some celebrate free market policies (Brown 1997), others hold that free market policies in the 1990s in Zimbabwe resulted in a crash of the manufacturing sector wages and the social wages in general (Bond 2005). Though some blame the governments for adopting the policies, others have argued that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank imposed the ESAP policies and the attendant conditionalities on developing countries of which many countries found themselves obliged to accept the IMF and World Bank ESAP programmes that led to losses of post-independence gains in welfare which had been part of the populist nationalist programmes.

In his assumption that rationality among rational human beings undergirded the social contract, Hobbes could have gone further to consider different kinds of rationality, as is evident from contemporary

scholarship on knowledge (see for instance Turnbull 2000) and how they played out in matters of politics and survival. He was of course concerned with a form of rationality which radically separated society from what he understood as “nature” but then not all rationalities were premised on such radical separations. Placing great hope on the modern rationality as he did, he did not envisage ways in which modern institutions such as the legal institution could be used to perpetrate what other scholars have called lawfare (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006) in reference to ways in which courts and the law are often used to persecute opponents as was noted in Zimbabwe. While Bodin (1992) suggested that the sovereign can only be absolute in relation to positive law and not in relation to divine law and natural law, this view ignores the implications of the secularisation of politics in matters of asserting sovereignty. The failure by the churches in Zimbabwe to bring contestants to negotiate fruitfully (Chitando and Manyonganise 2011), signified ways in which even the quests for divine intervention could not provide guarantees in the political terrain where issues of governance, sovereignty, nationhood and survival are often defined more in terms of secular expediencies, however limited in their own imports.

For these reasons, questions about how to rein in the excesses of the sovereign need to tackle the dichotomies between the secular and the sacred. There is need to think what secular tools are available to effectively control the sovereign or what sacred tools are available for the same purpose or still what tools bridging the secular and the sacred aspects are available to curtail excesses. Cyber democracy or electronic democracy on the internet (Bryan et al 1998, Muzondidya 2010, McGregor 2010) has offered spaces to transcend the limitations of the assertions of the sovereigns. They are noted to have, through virtual spaces offered new ways of rethinking space, time, the social, the political, the private and the public beyond the narrower assertions of the sovereign. However, along with civil society organisations, the ideological inclinations of the forms of media are often contested in as much as they are often inaccessible in the everyday life of many in villages such as I studied, afflicted by conflict and want.

The contestations around matters of sovereignty in Zimbabwe mirrored contestations of the idea of sovereignty in scholarship. Though some scholars like Smith (2011) have written against sovereignty, others have argued that it is difficult to imagine how it could be possible to manage pressing socio-political,

economic, ecological, technological and even international problems and crisis trends without institutional machinery necessitating the sovereign (Offe 1996: 66). Others have argued that it is states that go to war not peoples, and it is the existence of the states that allows people to know when they are at war, when war is over, and whether they have won, otherwise war would not be war but chaos. It is states that enable people to know whether they are up or down (David Runciman cited in Bickerton et al 2007: 10). Although scholars like Saskia Sassen (1996: 1-30) cited in Hansen and Stepputat (2005) argued that sovereignty is being “unbundled” away from the nation-states and into new and partially global and supranational arenas and institutions, others have noted the persistence of sovereignty. It has for instance been argued that the war on terror and the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrated that underneath the complex structures of power in modern liberal societies, territorial sovereignty and the foundational violence that gave birth to the “truth” of the Euro modern nation-states remains the *raison d’être* in periods of crisis (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). Still other scholars have understood sovereignty not necessarily in terms of absolute autonomy but in terms of the independence of a state interacting in a system of states (Fowler and Bunk 1960), but some have argued that the products of state building are frail because they derive their authority from their relationships with international organisations rather than a political relationship with own societies (Bickerton et al 2007).

But there have also been contestations about which notion of sovereignty is being critiqued in scholarship with some arguing that the idea of sovereignty that is being critiqued is the modern one that emerged in Europe from the complex power struggles between the Vatican and the Kings of northern and western Europe (Hansen and Stepputat 2005). So while some have argued that the idea of sovereignty that is fading today is of more recent origin- the liberal constitutional sovereign state that can be dated to the 1789 French Revolution (Bickerton et al 2007) - others have predicted anarchy in the absence of the sovereign. Yet scholars writing about Africa have argued that a picture of the pre-colonial period as feuding chaos is incorrect (Bourdillon 1991: 13) as there were networks of trading links which could only have been possible in a situation of some stability. Others have in fact noted that before AD 1100 Iron Age societies in pre-colonial Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were stratified, with headmen and political chiefdoms, and, as the pre-colonial Zimbabwe state emerged, institutions of kingship and political dynasties evolved (Huffman 1980).

Despite some tensions, it has been noted that many different groups of people lived in comparative peace though Europeans stressed Ndebele raids (Beach 1994, Ranger 1966: 173, 174).

In spite of these contentions scholars like Bhila (1982) have noted the existence of pre-colonial wars though some of them were noted as fanned by the Portuguese who were interested in controlling African polities and economies. While other scholars like Daneel (1970) have noted that even *Mwari* (God) in vernacular was God of peace, some scholars have noted that although it was *Mwari* who ordered that the column of colonial officials on the initial colonising mission enter the territory, it was also *Mwari* who ordered that inhabitants rebel against the colonial officials (Kane 1954: 27, Bullock 1927: 123). The invasion of what is now Zimbabwe by Cecil Rhodes' forces gave rise to the Ndebele war of 1893 and to the first Chimurenga war of 1896-7 both of which risings were led by chiefs, Ndebele indunas (warriors) and some religious figures (Ranger 1977). Other scholars like Chitiyo (2004) have noted that the first Chimurenga war in Zimbabwe was against colonial land seizures, the hut tax and it was also a response to environmental calamities of rinder pest, locusts and droughts which inhabitants believed were caused by white settlers that they regarded as destroying the balance of nature. During the first Chimurenga war, colonial soldiers and police seized the crops of the inhabitants as well as their livestock. The war claimed 8000 lives (Ranger 1977). Bulldozers were used to raze homes and armed police also rounded up the inhabitants' villages as ways to suppress the revolt. The second Chimurenga, stretching from 1960s to 1979, claimed 50 000 people of different races but it was mainly Africans who were tortured, beaten, murdered by the Rhodesian Front and by the guerrillas (Schmidt 2013). The second Chimurenga war created 250 000 refugees and 400 000 people were internally displaced while 750 000 people were kept in what were called protected villages which were in practice camps designed to prevent the inmates from collaborating with liberation fighters (Schmidt 2013). In the 1980s, soon after gaining independence from Britain, there was also the Gukurahundi (Alexander et al 2000) in which the postindependence government launched an onslaught against the Ndebele some of whom were alleged to be bent on destabilising, with the support of the South African apartheid government of that time, the new postcolonial Zimbabwean government (Zunga 2003).

The Zimbabwean government's onslaught, in recent years, against civil society organisations that they

deemed to be agents of neoimperialism bears testimony to the kinds of struggles civil society organisations themselves have to survive (Tarisayi 2009, Coltart 2008, and Matyszak 2009). The hardships including risks of being arrested for activism as well as the general hardships of the Zimbabwean crisis, which members of civil society organisations had to survive, indicate the kind of difficulties that activists had to bear in the name of democracy and agitation for the rule of law. The frequent electricity black-outs and the acute cash shortages, both of which affected the usability of communication and information technologies, testify to the shortcomings of the communication and information technologies in matters of democracy, and struggles for survival. The assumption, in instituting such mechanisms of civility, is that the mechanisms are themselves resilient and invariably equal to the challenges of survival in the contexts of hardships. But then they are often inaccessible, unaffordable and therefore out of reach in contexts such as Zimbabwe, particularly in rural peasant communities lacking not only in electricity but also in regular and sufficient incomes to run the technologies.

Though such rural communities lacked radios, mobile phones and telephones, the internet, and electricity or batteries to power those technologies, they had means of surviving the violence and repression. Through such means, which I will explore in this dissertation, they actively struggled to survive violence including food shortages, unemployment and droughts. Implied in the modes of engagement are alternatives to the conventional notions of civil society and there is recourse to what Kasfir (1998) calls the “primordial public realm” which, however unorganised it may appear to outsiders, is often viewed by many Africans as far more significant than the formally organised civil society promoted by scholars and donors. The modes of engagement have some parallels with arguments by some scholars that in real life people normally seek alternative channels, sometimes subtle and masked ways for fulfilling their aspirations and protecting their interests in such situations thereby necessitating looking beyond formal organisations in seeking civil society (Nyamnjoh 2005). But in a context with a background where colonial authorities defined domains of life in terms of private and public spheres considering their colonial institutions to constitute the public sphere within which civility inhabited (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), defining civility in postcolonial terms requires new theorisation. It implies that scholars and analysts of Africa may not always find civil society where they

are used to looking for it and therefore there is a need to provide a theoretical space for the possibility of civil society in Africa taking new forms that are unlimited to simplistic oppositions between “modern” and “traditional” (Nyamnjoh 2005). The issue is arguably to make notions of democracy democratic and notions of freedom free (see Englund 2006) by opening them up to alternative and conflicting definitions that do not assume that the majority of citizens are ignorant, uncivil and backward. Rethinking such modes of politics offers space to understand civic groups and engagements that operate outside the colonial modernist frame (Makumbe 1998: 306) but which as a result of colonial politics and epistemologies, which continue to predominate, were officially treated with aversion.

Colonially categorised and treated as “traditional” and “ethnic” (Ranger 2010, Lentz 1995) the otherwise more flexible and inclusive modes of engagement of the inhabitants were rigidified and parochialised. In a context such as Zimbabwe where different groups of people such as Venda, Karanga, Kharutse, Ndebele, Ndaou and Kalanga that straddled different contemporary nations such as Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique resorted to the same *Mwali* cult at the Matopo Hills (Werbner 1989, Werbner 1977 cited in Ranger 1979), the groups could hardly be defined in narrow ethnic terms. Narrowed down identities (see for instance Nyamnjoh 2007) can aptly be understood in terms of Maldonado-Torres’ (2008) conceptualisation of Euro-modernity as a paradigm of war, on the basis of the binaries it is understood to have instantiated by rigidifying identities.

In *chivanhu*, which has been erroneously rendered in scholarship as “tradition” or “traditional religion” of the Shona people of Zimbabwe (Shoko 2012, Gelfand 1964), distinctions often do not invariably assume the salience that are rendered in “modernist” epistemologies. Things, as I will argue below, are often assumed to be connected or to be possibly or potentially connected in many ways one of which is via the wind or air (*mbepo* or *mweya* in vernacular terms). Such conceptualisations resemble findings by other scholars that the wind or air is variously understood not only in meteorological senses of natural science but also in terms of “deities” or “spirits” that connect things and enable life (see for instance Kuriyama 2002, Low and Hsu 2008). Though such wind or air (also understood in terms of souls) has been conceived by some scholars like Bird-David (1999) in terms of animism which presupposes immanence of the wind or air in things that are deemed

to have souls or “spirits” like the human ones, other scholars render different translations. Some scholars have noted that those who have considered African modes of engagement as animism have based their arguments on casual enquiries and so they missed the nuances of such African modes of engagements (Opoku 1978: 10, Rattray 1927: 2-3). It is argued by these scholars that the “spirits”, which are understood to have unlimited mobility, in Africa come to attach themselves to objects which do not however become interchangeable with the spirits’ or “gods” simply because the “spirits” have attached themselves to them.

Regarded by *svikiro* mediums, *n’anga* (healers or prophets) and their followers as places of recourse for supplication in times of difficulties including droughts, conflicts and illness (see also Gelfand 1959, Daneel 1970, and Ranger 1999); places where *midzimu* or ancestors and *Mwari* were deemed to manifest were revered. Such places as the mountains, including the famous Matopo Hills in south western, Zimbabwe have been conceived as resting places (rather than the embodiment of the ancestors) for ancestors’ spirits (Murphy and Wannenburg 1978). But these were also places where, because the objects of reverence were not regarded as mere objects, the “modernist nature-culture divide” (see Latour 1993, 2004), which is the basis of the modernist constitution and the social contract, is rendered fuzzy. While Latour’s conceptualisation of the modern in terms of the divides is useful in analysing the modes of engagement in this study, it is also important to notice that the terms nature and culture are not themselves in widespread common use in everyday life (where there is rather much use of terms like *zvisikwa* (God’s creations that constitute heritages) and *chivanhu* (modes of engagement which other scholars have understood as tradition) in spite of close to a century of colonial occupation and state formations informed by Euro-modernist epistemologies. Modernity, as Comaroff and Comaroff (1993) argue, can not be defined in the singular in contexts where the cultures of industrial capitalism have never existed in the singular either in Europe or in their myriad transformations across the face of the earth. Other scholars like Schmidt (2006) and Eisenstadt (2000) have preferred to write in terms of varieties of modernity and multiple modernities respectively. As I will explain in this thesis, in every day life the terms modernity and tradition are not commonly used. Rather, villagers tend to speak about *chirungu* (in vernacular this simply refers to European ways of life, including the spiritual aspect of life) and *chivanhu* (which in vernacular refers to the African ways of life) which are terms that have different valences to

modernity and tradition as binaries which presume that one is contemporary and the other is past. In this thesis, the concept "modernity" is used for analytic purposes to describe the worldview that holds to those binaries, without implying agreement with those binaries. Thus while the "nature-culture" divide, in Latour's sense, may have been foisted on Africa by modernist epistemologies and politics, the exactions by various European governments had unforeseen outcomes as the conquered and the colonised societies were never simply transformed into the European image. In fact in everyday life as I will show in this thesis, there are no presumptions in the concepts *chirungu* and *chivanhu* that *chirungu* separates nature and culture as in fact there were some villagers who considered *varungu* (Europeans) to have, with colonialism, appropriated *zvishikwa* using the *chirungu* cultural frames, including land which was one of the basis of the conflicts in Zimbabwe. In the spaces of everyday life in the villages, alternative epistemologies and ontologies have persisted in spite of the predominance of colonial education within institutions. In spite of getting some recognition in some sectors (NcNeish 2005, Ajei 2007, World Bank 2004, United Nations Environment Programme 2008), such popular epistemologies have not been adequately considered in everyday life modes of surviving violence, that is, in matters of peacemaking and peace building in the world.

Such spaces of everyday life constitute a heterodox mix of fluid, multiple and dense practices, and often escape the panoptic gaze of bureaucratic power (de Certeau 1984: 60). Although the concept of everyday life has been vilified by some philosophers as confused, mystified and relying on unsubstantiated prejudices rather than on verifiable principles of objective science (Gardner 2000: 131), for other scholars, everyday life constitutes the margins of the state or sites of practices where the state is often remade as populations struggle to secure political and economic survival (Das and Poole 2004). While everyday life is often constituted in terms of forms of resistance (Scott 1985); it can not necessarily be reducible to acts of resistance but rather it involves mix of ways of enhancing and sustaining life. Though everyday life has been understood in terms of acts, events, happenings, meanings, worldviews, language, communication, interaction, work, imagination, consciousness and interpretations of human beings (Heller 1990), there is an emerging corpus of literature that indicates the existence of different, if broader, conceptualisations of life in different places of the world. Scholarship on "non-modern" ontologies (see Blaser 2009) and on animist



ontologies (see Viveiros de Castro 2004, Bird-David 1999) underscore the existence of broader understandings of life in societies where objects of “nature” are deemed to have souls in ways that often parallel human ones. The upshot of insights from such ontologies has been efforts to rethink peace not merely in terms of human cosmopolitanisms but in terms of what has been called cosmopolitics (see Latour 2004, de la Cadena 2010) that includes “non human” entities in a relational ontological sense. But other scholars, as I have noted with reference to Opoku (1978), have argued that some places and things do not have souls but become the abode or places to which ‘spirits’ of the deceased humans in the form of ancestors attach themselves more or less temporarily in order to use the objects as vehicles to exercise their influence.

While the relational ontologies posited by the scholars have been argued to be useful in rethinking what are understood in the scholarship as modernist binaries such as between subject/object, nature/culture there are shortcomings of such relational approaches at least in the ways in which they are sometimes explicated in scholarship. Relational ontologies have a number of tenets as scholars like Herva (2009) have pointed out. Citing Ingold 2006), Herva notes that relational ontologies propose that all entities in the world (organisms and things) are continuously changing or coming into being, and that the identities and properties of entities are determined by the relationship between different entities. So for Herva, the identities and properties of organisms and things are contextual and continuously being generated rather than “inscribed” in the physical constitution of entities. The upshot of this argument is Herva notes, that relational ontologies dissolve the boundary between organism and its environment and rejects the subject-object dualism that pervades modernist epistemologies. But the basic contention that relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves (Wildman 2006, Inwagen 2011, Paul n.d) risks whittling down the significance of the substantive entities themselves. The scholars’ contention that the substantive entities themselves have no essence, no inherent qualities of their own, has been critiqued by other scholars who argued that denying essence to Africans explained colonialism. Vera (2001: 116) for instance has argued that to circumscribe and dominate Africa as an Edenic space depends on the elimination of the African as actual human presence; in this way the African essence is circumscribed before it is actually encountered. The issue

of the denial of African essence raised by Vera has been noted as having been central to the colonisation process in what is now Zimbabwe where Mungazi (1996) for instance notes that after the deposition of King Lobengula in the 1890s, there was the publication of the Rohn Report which appeared in highly negative images toward the mind of the Africans who were described in the report as “stupid animals”. Taking substantivist ontology (as distinct from a relational ontology) in which entities are ontologically primary and relations are ontologically derivative instantiates the categories premised on delimitations of the entities. Furthermore the sheer variety of relations which can be emotional, sexual, aesthetic, spiritual, legal, moral, imaginary, financial, technical, semiotic, political, economic, linguistic, physical pose challenges in specifying kinds of relations in operation and the values attached to them at any given time and place. What this implies is that the phenomenon of relations is much more complex than is often presented in scholarship that focuses on one or a few strands at the expense of others which may be equally or more valued depending on space, time and other variables.

Latour’s (2005) Actor-Network approach that seeks to bridge binaries between humans and what he calls “nonhumans” by considering both as actors/actants is itself premised on the application of semiotics of materiality (Law 2006). On the other hand Ingold’s idea of “meshworks of entangled lines of life is about the way in which materials of various and variable properties, enlivened by the forces of the cosmos, mix and meld with one another in the generation of things” (Ingold 2010). So while Ingold (2007) underlines that in animistic cosmologies there is attribution of supreme importance to the winds, as winds give shape and direction to people’s lives as much as they are powerful in their own right, other scholars stress the significance of material objects in understanding life. In understanding relations, other scholars argue that what connects is the universe as a whole through the energy locked in nature (Helmoltz 1892: 141 cited in Brown and Capdevila 2006). Still other scholars emphasise social relations in conceptualising networks (Noble 1973, Boissevain and Mitchel 1973). In formulating their theories about relationality scholars such as Viveiros de Castro (2004) and Bird-David (1999) suggest the existence of similar souls in human beings and nonhuman entities. Though the subject-subject relations implied in the animist scholarship are important in rethinking violence, the challenge is that forms of violence such as torture were based precisely on the

recognition of the tortured as a subject, with feelings of pain which were the basis of attempts to extract confession and other evidence. In other words, some forms of violence are precisely directed at subjects and not objects. Still other scholars emphasise the wind variously conceived as connecting entities of various kinds (Low and Hsu 2008). These various ways of conceiving relations speak to the diversity of relations and the values attached to them in scholarship, as well as in everyday life.

The ways in which different epistemologies and ontologies with different metaphysical commitments play out together, connecting and separating (Verran 2013, Turnbull 2000) is best considered in everyday life situations where struggles for survival often necessitate tactical and strategic turns. Such struggles to survive are spaces where modern rationality and its negated alterity co-realise themselves in processes of creative fertilisation as people navigate hardships. They offer spaces, as it were, to rethink modernity from its underside (Maldonado-Torres 2008) and to decolonise epistemologies that were dismissed by “modern” rationality, which closed off the very possibilities that the alternative rationalities opened up (Pignarre and Stengers 2011). To appreciate the setting of the fieldwork, it is important to now look briefly at the field site.

### **The Research Site: Contextualising Matters of Violence and Survival**

Such struggles to survive violence and other forms of want characterised the citizens of Zimbabwe but here I focus on informants from six villages in three wards in the district of Buhera in Manicaland province, some three hundred kilometres east of the Zimbabwean capital city of Harare. Buhera district was one of the districts that were most intensely affected by violence partly because the leader of the opposition party the MDC hailed from Buhera district which was thus heavily contested between the opposition party and the ruling ZANU PF party that historically had its strongholds in rural districts including Buhera. According to Beach (1980), Buhera was an area dominated from the pre-colonial era by people of the Shava/Hera totem dynasties in the south centre of the country, that is, the land between the main watershed in the west, the Odzi River in the east, the upper Sabi valley in the north and the Devure River in the south. The Shava/Hera totem was not exclusive in this area but the dominant dynasties of the Hera were the Mbiru of Shava totem which constituted the nucleus of the Shava/Hera area. Old Buhera in the pre-colonial period used to consist

of all the land from the Sabi-Odzi and Sabi-Devure confluences as far up as the Umnati River on the other side of the main watershed of the plateau. Inhabitants of the Njanja totem as well as villagers of other totems have over time, by their settlement and expansion, divided the Hera territory into two. Archaeological evidence in Buhera consists of a number of stone structures of the Zimbabwe-Khami culture, one of which is a loopholed wall on Gombe Mountain similar to the loopholed forts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Mutapa state. The fort is one of the few stone buildings on the plateau to be definitely linked with a Shona ruler, that of Mbiru (Beach 1980:74-5). Mbiru was seen in Buhera as the founding ancestor of the Hera/Shava/Museyamwa people and of the many Shava groups as well. He is said to have come from *mbiri kwegungwa* (overseas), but others say he came from the Zulu, yet others still say he was in Buhera from the beginning. Mbiru's place of abode shifted frequently from Gombe Mountain. In Buhera many families claim descent from Mbiru as well as from the dynastic title that replaced Mbiru which is Nyashanu. Dikiro and Matema each of whom, with Rozvi assistance, deposed his father's brothers and his own elder brother spearheaded the change from Mbiru to Nyashanu. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a coup in which a Mbiru ruler deposed his father with the Rozvi assistance and it was at this time that the Mbiru title changed to Nyashanu (Beach 1980:289). The old Gombe was abandoned by the Hera/Shava to the oncoming Njanja totem. There were raids, in the area, by the Rozvi and there was also the weakening of old Buhera by civil wars as well as by the tendency of the Hera to move away. There was settlement in old Buhera by the Njanja who had proof of origins in the lower Zambezi (Beach, 1980:289). The origins of the Njanja have been traced to the Portuguese held territory and this has led to suggestions that the Njanja founding ancestor called Muroro was a Portuguese though careful examination of the earlier Njanja suggests the original Njanja were Africans (Beach *ibid*: 291-2). Three generations after the arrival of Muroro, that is, 1724 +/- 40, the Njanja expanded across old Buhera. Muroro's family group originally settled in Bvumbura in western Buhera under the local Shiri totem of the Chirwa ruler. For Beach (1980), it was with the support of the Rozvi ruler called Gwangwava that Neshangwe, the Njanja leader 1805 +/- 28 supplanted the Chirwa ruler and became the first of a line of independent rulers named Gambiza. Moving from Bvumbura, the Njanja occupied a large tract of Hera territory in Buhera. In some cases the Hera fought back but much of the land including the Old Hera centre

of Gombe Mountain was taken without a struggle. By 1857 the Njanja had acquired a reputation as iron workers and wealth from iron trade enabled Neshangwe to increase his following. All the available evidence on the iron industry associates it with the northern Njanja dynasties nearest to Wedza Mountain. What is lacking in these accounts by Beach (1980) is what oral evidence during the fieldwork indicated which is that Kuvheya, who is identified by Beach (1980) as Muroro, got married during his trips from Mozambique to Bvumbura to King Chirwa's daughter and this is how Muroro happened in the first instance to be given a piece of land by Chirwa. He had many children and so his requests for pieces of land were granted by the ruler to whom Kuvheya had become related and this is partly how the Njanja expanded (interview with Kotwa 3/6/2011).

As recorded in the 2005 census, Buhera district has a population of about 30 000 and there are 12000 households, wards have an average of about 3 000 voters. Buhera district is particularly of interest because that is where the leader of the opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) hails from. Other notable political party members hailing from Buhera are Kenneth Manyonda of the ruling ZANU PF party, Joseph Chinotimba of ZANU PF, Kumbirai Kangai of ZANU PF, Paul Madzore of MDC.

The district is in the communal lands (where villagers survive as subsistence farmers, formerly governed under the colonial Tribal Trust Lands (TTL) Act of 1930 but now governed under the Communal Lands Act of 1982. Chiefs, Headmen and Village heads assist in governing the area in terms of the "Traditional" Leaders Act (Chapter 29: 17 of 1998) which defines their powers and parameters. Apart from the "traditional" leaders the District Council also governs the district under the Rural District Councils Act (Revised Edition of 1999). Although the district is predominantly populated by the Shona speaking people, there are some Ndebele speaking people in the far north who were resettled by the colonial government from Matebeleland region to Buhera in the 1930s following the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 which divided land along racial lines (see for instance Anderson 1999, Musoni 2005, Palmer 1977). So though initially occupied by the Hera people under Mbiru (see for instance Beach 1980) the district is now also occupied by many groups of people including the Njanja.

Conflicts over land and over political leadership have occurred in the district since the pre-colonial era

when different groups of people and even members of the same clans vied for positions (Beach 1980) and because Buhera is where the opposition party leader and Zimbabwe's Prime Minister in the inclusive government of 2009 comes from, it was one of the hotbeds of violence in Zimbabwe's recent past. During the colonial period, conflict over land occurred between the Ndebele immigrants being resettled in the district by the colonial government and the Njanja who had settled in the area prior to colonialism (Anderson 1999, Musoni 2005).

The soils in the district are sandy with scattered rich red and black soil in the northern part of the district. The district is located in an area with annual rainfall below 650mm. For this reason it is afflicted with droughts and therefore there is extensive and semi-extensive farming. Partly because of its location villagers in the district have suffered food shortages and therefore they have had to supplement agriculturally based food production with gathering wild fruits and hunting small animals (Mararike 1999). In the past they have also relied on remittances from relatives as well as on government drought relief programmes and on Non-Governmental Organisations such as AFRICARE and Dananai. They have also relied on other modes of engagement including *mukwerera* (rain petitioning, conventionally referred to as rain making) to avert droughts (Mutasa 2010, Mararike 1999, Vuihuizen 1997). Apart from relying on alternative epistemologies, the villagers also relied on meteorological reports to predict the weather patterns and thus agricultural cycles. Although NGOs have supplied food to the villagers, they often specified criteria for distribution that left out some villagers. Also sometimes the village heads or political party leaders who often mediated in the donations did not include the names of their opponents on the requisite list of would-be-beneficiaries. For these reason, food donations were themselves causes of friction among the villagers some of whom sought to edge others out of lists of beneficiaries. Apart from wrangles about food donations, relations among villagers were also strained by competition for land on which to establish gardens. During the period of the crisis, vegetables often supplanted the staple diet of the villagers based on *sadza* (thick maize porridge). But because of the recurrent droughts many rivers in the district dried out resulting in competition for land close to the few rivers that remained with water.

But the conflicts over the land in the district also involved government institutions and officials. For

instance in June 2011 I attended a village meeting convoked by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) to discuss the issue of gardens. At the meeting the EMA official insisted the villagers moved their gardens from the banks of the major rivers because the gardens were causing siltation of the rivers. Villagers argued on the other hand that there was nowhere else they could erect their gardens which were their source of livelihood. The EMA official threatened legal action against defiant villagers but during the conversation I had with one of the villagers after the meeting, he pointed out that no one would pull down his garden. He said he would resort to witchcraft should anyone attempt to pull down his garden.

In the cases of violence recourse could be to the police stationed at centres such as Murambinda and Buhera offices but villagers often alleged biases in the ways in which the police, some chiefs and village heads handled reports. In this context some resorted to prayers in the various churches within the villages as ways of coping with the violence. Branches of churches such as apostolic sects, Apostolic Faith Mission, Roman Catholic, Methodist are found in the district and because the Shona predominate in Buhera it is important to briefly put Buhera in the broader context of Shona socio-economic history.

### **Buhera and some Issues in the Broader Shona Context**

Villagers in Buhera made reference to the phenomenon of the *ngozvi*, (also reported by Bourdillon 1976, Gelfand 1956, 1959), that is, the aggrieved dead who are deemed to return to afflict tormenters. Other villagers made reference to ways in which they considered the *mbondoro* clan ancestors and *Mwari* (God) punished those who tormented and killed others. Such reference to the *mbondoro* and to *Mwari* as capable of punishing crimes such as murder and incest have been reported as widespread in parts of Zimbabwe (Gelfand 1956, Vuifhuizen 1997) but they also portray politics as beyond the human, if narrow secular domain.

But apart from punishing offenders, *Mwari* and the *mbondoro* were deemed to be providers of food (Gelfand 1967: 21), to protect inhabitants and guarantee their welfare provided the living obeyed rules including respect for life, sexual purity and care of the environment (Chung 2006). The inhabitants such as the Njanja are noted as not only have mined and smelted iron ore, copper, gold, produced cloth (Bourdillon 1991: 7, 13; Ellert

1984: 50) but to also have engaged in the production of various items via the aid of ritual activities to ancestors and the *mbondoro* (Chirikure 2010) who were deemed to play roles in the economic as well as political activities.

There are indications that in Zimbabwe such conceptualisations of the *mbondoro* and *Mwari* offered buffers against misrule and against narrow political interest. The *mbondoro* were deemed to be in communion and to consult together on appropriate occasions and so often influence transcended individual “tribes” owing to historical links between them (Abraham 1966: 38). Historically, the *Mwari* cult functioned at a broader level to investigate abuses following from narrow ruling-class orientation and individual kings who incurred the displeasure of the *Mwari* cult fled for fear of supernatural sanctions that it invoked. Thus there were indications that the highest *mbondoro* had “transtribal” influence and power though there was confusion as to whether these *mbondoro* were really clan ancestors or they had never had origin in mortal existence (Muphree 1967: 44). Some noted that some *mbondoro*, that others deemed to have been actually prophets, such as Chaminuka, Goronga, Makwati and Nehanda were addressed as *vana vaMwari* in Shona or as *Abatwana BoMlimo* (in Ndebele) translated as Children of God (Bullock 1950). This was because they were deemed to be emanations of *Mwari* and associated closely with the *Mwari* cult and the priest attached to the cave shrines at the Matopo Hills and for this reason they were not appeased by sacrifice because the *mweya* that seized them had never had mortal existence. As hinted above the breadth of the influence of the *Mwari* cult was so extensive that even the Ndaue and the Manyika (dialects of the Shona) people in the far eastern side of Zimbabwe sent delegates to the Matopo Hills in the South Western part of the country (McGonagle 2007: 83). In this way the *Mwari* cult served to link the Ndaue and the Manyika across political boundaries with others in the broader region including inhabitants of countries such as South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia that surround Zimbabwe. But other scholars have traced the *Mwari* cult as well as Chaminuka to as far as the vicinity of Lake Tanganyika and to a time before 1500s, well before the colonial period (Ntholi 2006).

But apart from connecting different people across broad areas, the *Mwari* cult also serves to show ways in which some particular mountains, hill and caves were not always regarded merely as objects of “nature”.



*Mwari* was deemed to “reside” in the skies and everywhere in the woods, or in the earth itself (Gelfand 1967). *Mwari* was also deemed to move from cave to cave or pass, like a shooting star, (Bullock 1950). But *Mwari* “was not a fetish god bound by some stick or stone but could pass over the breadth of the land manifesting his presence by a divine fire” (Bullock 1927). Although other scholars and colonial officials argued that the voice, deemed to be that of *Mwari*, which was heard from the cave, could have been that of a ventriloquist “witchdoctor” assisted by the echoes of the cave (Bullock 1950, Chigwedere 1991), other scholars have problematised the notion of witchdoctor (Chavunduka 1980, Gelfand 1967). Gelfand for instance has argued that the term witchdoctor is wrong if it is used to denote something bad or evil since the *n’anga* (erroneously translated as witchdoctor) is not evil but the word may have been originally used in its wider aspect to denote one who is able to manipulate occult forces for the good of human beings. For Gelfand (1967), the Shona people believed that in “nature” exists power or forces that could be manipulated to benefit or destroy.

These differences in understanding the modes of engagements can be understood in terms of epistemological and political hurdles that beset the colonial context. While some suggest that the colonial authorities, keen to establish their kind of order, would not have admitted of other forms of order and power for fear that they would not have been able to mobilise the labour power of the inhabitants of the colonial territory (see for instance Simmons 2012), other scholars argued that the modes of engagement of the inhabitants were favourable to the state. Gelfand (1956: 168) for instance argued that the Shona who considered the “spirit” world as very real feared the dead and this ensured that they did not become a problem to the colonial state. But some scholars like Ranger (1969: 95) note that in November 1897, within four years of occupation of the territory by the settlers, a magistrate called Marshal Hole wrote that “the superstition of the Shona rendered the task of reducing them to submission far harder than the Ndebele” who he deemed to be “reasonable enough to know when they were beaten”. Although Gelfand (1956: 168) argued that it was when these “tribal” ties and rites were abandoned or became lax that the individual lost his fear of the spirits, was tempted to break the law, and thereby became a problem to the “state”, other scholars like Lyons (2004) noted that even the colonial settlers were afraid of the ‘spirits’ as exemplified when in 1897 they killed mediums of *mbuya* Nehanda and *sekuru* Kaguvi who led the first rebellion against the colonisers;

Because the settlers were afraid of the resurrection of the spirits, they buried the mediums' bodies in secret graves so that their bones and spirits would not rise again and find new mediums. . While the work of other scholars (see for instance Levin 1993, Erlman 2004, Stoller 1989, Classen 1993) suggest that the problem in understanding such metaphysical and cosmological modes of engagement premised on invisible entities could have been because of modernist epistemological privileging of the sense of vision, the challenge is that even as such everyday life modes of engagements were officially dismissed, the modern colonial government set up institutions which were themselves not amenable to the sense of sight.

Though the modernist epistemology's emphasis on empirical observation raised the sense of sight to a privileged position relative to other senses (Stoller 1989, Levin 1993), the development of virtual modes of communication has been understood by some in terms of the mystical and spiritual. Deleuze's approach to the cinema has for instance been that mysticism can be understood as a practice which actualises a prediscursive seeing and hearing, a vision or a voice that otherwise would have remained virtual and which constitutes an ecstatic experience of the outside (Goddard 2001). For Deleuze, as in the case of the mystic, cinema is understood to become a "spiritual" tool capable of facilitating an experience beyond the boundaries of static selves and into profound contact with the outside. Such a Deleuzean rendering has potential to offer space to rethink the binaries between the secular/sacred, visible/invisible that modernity is understood to have instantiated, it is an approach that makes it possible to conceptualise ways in which reenchantment of the world has taken effect in the contemporary period. However the presuppositions of immanence in the renderings are problematic in epistemologies that do not deem spirits to be necessarily immanent in matter whether "natural" or artificial. This observation notwithstanding, the renderings can be useful in understanding *chivanhu* where assumptions of radical, invariable distinctions, between the visible/invisible, secular/sacred are not sustained. A closer look at *chivanhu* shows that it is not invariably about conventional secular ocularcentrism.

## ***Chivanhu* and Survival Struggles**

*Chivanhu*, which is understood by some scholars, like Shoko (2012), in terms of traditional religion and by other scholars like Gelfand (1964, 1985) in terms of traditional medicine, is the original term for the vernacular language now popularly known as *Chishona* or *Shona*. It is the term from which the vernacular word *vanhu* (people) originates from. The vernacular language called *chivanhu* or *Chishona* includes a number of dialects such as *chikaranga*, *chindau*, *chizexuru*, *chimanyika*. In addition, *chivanhu* also refers to the etiquette (*tsika*) which includes the rules that one is expected to follow, the vernacular modes of engagement and of thought that are enshrined in what is called *bunhu*. The *tsika* (etiquette) is the criterion upon which one is classified as *munhu* (person) with *bunhu*. This *bunhu/unhu* has been understood by some scholars as the spiritual content of one's personality or the moral and ethical aspects which if one is lacking one is referred to as: “*bavana bunhu*” (they do not have that which marks a person) or they may be referred to as “*imbuka dzexvanhu*” (they are mere animals) (see Chivaura n.d). The *bunhu* is characterised by togetherness, brotherhood, sympathy, respect, tolerance, peace, sharing, oneness (Muzvidziwa and Muzvidziwa 2012). *Hunhu* also includes politeness, civility, circumlocution, propriety (Pearce 1990, Gelfand 1970, Mandova and Chingombe 2013). The *munhu* can be used to refer to an ordinary person and more significantly to one who is considered to be fully moral. Whereas Brown (2001) characterises things in terms of liminality and ambiguity, *chinhu* (plural *zvinhu*) the equivalent of thing in vernacular terms, as contrasted with *munhu* (plural *vanhu*) the equivalent of human being is not invariably ambiguous or liminal but denotes something distinct from a human being/person.

Apart from the moral, ethical and linguistic aspects of *chivanhu*, there is the aspect of *mweya/mbepo* (air/wind/breath) which has been translated rather narrowly, by some scholars, as “spirit” in spite of its contentious history (see for instance Kuriyama 2002, Low and Hsu 2008). The concepts of *mweya/mbepo* have been variously understood in the passing references in the existing literature on Zimbabwe. *Mweya/mbepo* has been understood as spirits manifesting as “breath” (Burbridge 1924). The *mweya* as it is conceived by the Shona has been understood by scholars like Muphree (1969) to refer to the psychic entity which can roughly be translated as “soul” that is the life principle of an individual that survives the death of the body. For

Zambezia (2002) *mbepo* is a metaphorical extension of the sense of *mbepo* (wind) in a meteorological sense. Other scholars like Werbner (1991) conceived *mbepo/mweya* as the souls of a person that survives the death of the body, that also defines the character of a person and that explains the changes of character. For Kramer (1993: 73) *Mweya* in Shona and *muuya* in Tonga dialects means wafts of air or breath and it is compared by the Shona with the wind. For scholars like Manyame-Tazarurwa (2011) *mbepo* in Shona refers to “spirits” that move about. *Mweya/mbepo* refers to the *mbondoro* clan ancestors (deemed to possess mediums), the *midzimu* or deceased family elders, an aggrieved dead returning in the form of *ngozi*, a deceased belonging to another clan or foreign land addressed as *shavi*, a *mweya/mbepo* of a deceased human being raised by witches that is understood as *chikwambo* (Gelfand 1959, Crawford 1967, Shoko 2007). But the *mweya* also refers to the Holy “spirit” addressed in vernacular as “*mweya mutsvene/ mudzimu unoera*”.

These various conceptualisations of wind/air point to some of the challenges faced in understanding the metaphysics of *chivanhu*. Understanding it, as has been done in much scholarship, simply and narrowly as tradition, loses the dynamism suggested by the idea of *mbepo* and *mweya* that presupposes motion. Time conceived in the secular humanistic mode is of a mechanical relentless marching from the past to the present and future (Delaney 2004). It ignores the motions of other kinds of things in the “universe”. It ignores the complexity of the “universe” whether conceived in terms of the scientific dark invisible matter or the ether (Mackenzie 1998) which has similar logics to *mweya*. It ignores the “oecological time” or time manifesting in the “rhythms of physical or organic nature” (see for instance James and Mills 2005). It hardly takes cognisance of the complexities, multiplicities and simultaneities (Mbembe 2001, Bergson 2002) of lived time as engendered by the (un)foldings of the “universe”, if worlds, with which different kinds of entities have motley connections. A decolonisation not only of space but also of time (Mignolo 2007) entails attention to such complex metaphysical conundrums that were hardly adequately digested in the bustle for colonies.

It is by refocusing attention to such different metaphysical renderings that the colonially induced balkanisation of spaces, temporalities and species can be rethought. Through attention to such renditions spaces can be redefined in ways that make them accommodative of connections to other spaces. Similarly, paying attention to such metaphysical renditions permits redefinition of temporalities in ways that allow for

their concurrences, multiplicities, simultaneities, conjunctures, and disjuncture as defined by different connections with different aspects of the worlds. By paying attention to such metaphysics the colonial fractionation and atomisation of spatial and temporal domains can be rethought in ways that have beneficial import on peacemaking. This is not of course to argue that the colonial simply fractionated things but the contention is also, if more, with the ways in which it a priori redefined and rendered the alternative cosmologies unfashionable, ignoring their nuances in the process. Replacing *chivanhu* with the narrower notions of culture and tradition, the colonial officials at least formally froze and humanised the otherwise more fluid modes of engagement that did not rigidly conceive time in terms of fractions belonging to the past, the present and the future. Intriguing to note in *chivanhu* are the ways in which different temporalities could sometimes cohabit in the same space in much the same way different entities could sometimes not be rigidly separated.

The vernacular term of *ukama* is useful in understanding the various connections between things including spaces, temporalities and species. While some scholars have understood *ukama* rather narrowly in terms of blood and affinal relationships (Gelfand 1981: 7, Mararike 1999, Gelfand 1987: 185-6) other scholars have understood it in terms of broader connections and interdependence among things in the “universe” (Murove 2009). In this sense, conceptualising *ukama* merely in terms of blood and affinal relationships unduly narrows down understandings of connections with other things including for instance the worlds of ancestors which are deemed to play roles in *chivanhu* such as in rain petitioning ceremonies. Such worlds and things are not connected merely via blood or affinal relations but also via *mweya/mbepo*. The only scholar that I have been able to find grappling with the ways in which different things were deemed to be connected in this way is Michael Gelfand (1959: 13). Gelfand wrote thus: “Perhaps better understood (by the Shona people) is the word ‘*Mbepo*’ or ‘*Mweya*’ which refers to the air upon which “man”, animals, insects and plants depend. The term is closely bound up with *Mwari* (God) because all living things depend on air. *Mbepo* or *Mweya* is part of the “tribal” spirits and every living being, as there is a continuous to-and-fro passage of air through the body”.

There are several issues that can be surfaced from this explication of *ukama* and the first one is in relation to relational ontologies which, as I have pointed out, is an approach advocated for by scholars, some of whose ideas I explore in the subsection on theoretical conceptual frameworks, endeavouring to rethink the modernist dichotomies. One issue is whether in this metaphysical rendition primacy is given to *ukama* rather than to the substantive entities constituting the web of *ukama*. If primacy is accorded to *ukama* rather than to the substantive entities the issue is whether this would not amount to what has been referred to as the death of the subject who has previously been denied space by structuralisms instantiated as part of modernity. If as Paul (n.d) points out, relational ontologists reject the notion that entities have internal structure and categorical priority, then this might well mean the death of the subject at least in so far as primacy is not accorded to the substantive entities themselves. Conversely if primacy is accorded to the substantive entities with relations being derivative, it becomes difficult to rethink the self-centredness that often characterise the perpetration of violence. If, as Fontein (2004) noted, mediums' narratives of their own past often illustrate the blurring between the agencies of the ancestors and themselves, whilst keeping the personhood of the mediums and the ancestors separate, then there is need to pay closer attention to liminal moments in *ukama*.

Though the configurations of *ukama* may be understood in terms of the Deleuzian Body Without Organs (BWO) by which he refers to an affective, intensive, anarchist body with zones and gradients and thresholds traversed by powerful inorganic vitality, not defined by its wholeness, its identity but its becoming, its intensity as a power to affect and to be affected (Poxon 2001) this rendition is problematic. It is problematic in that in *ukama* the identity of the person does not necessarily appear to have been fractured beyond recognition as suggested by Poxon (2001). *Ukama* does not necessarily entail the dissolution of the person or self, even in the case of healers and spirit mediums that are sometimes possessed by ancestors (*midzimu*), they appear to retain or recover their senses of personhood and self identity. In a context where citizens engage in exorcism as well as cleansing rituals (Dube 2011, Schmidt 1995, Reynolds 1996) and where mediums are not necessarily possessed all the time, it is necessary to interrogate notions of immanence and transcendence in relation to the struggles for survival.

The notion of immanence of God in nature (Smith 2001, Pearson 2001, and Bryden 2001) requires interrogation in view of the vernacular references to *Mwari* as *Nyadenga/Samatenga* (owner of the skies) or *Wekumusorosoro* (the one who ranks highest above the creatures). Though there are reports that inhabitants of what is now Zimbabwe visited the Matopo Hills to consult the voice of God that manifested in it (Ranger 1999, Daneel 1970), other scholars have drawn similarities between the inhabitants' conceptualisations of God and the Christian one (see also Jeater 2007). For Bullock (1950) *Mlimo* or *Mwari* is the highest God whose name is used by some mission society in translating God. In his first Anthropological textbook on Zimbabwe, Bullock (1927) noted that "natives" referred to *denga*/heaven in the same way Europeans did. *Mwari/Musikavanhu* was deemed to be lofty and indifferent to prayers, well being and suffering of individuals and he concerned himself with communities rather than individuals (Gelfand 1967). But there was an elaborate indirect approach to *Mwari* through mediums and the *mbondoro*; direct approach to *Mwari* was made by the priests of *Mwari* at one of his shrines at the Matopo caves (Muphree 1967). While scholars writing on animism argue that in animistic societies nonhumans such as animals are considered to have culture, dances and other attributes paralleling human ones (Descola 1996), the modes of engagements to avert droughts in what is conventionally understood as "rainmaking" (Gelfand 1959, Bourdillon 1991, Daneel 1998, 1970) suggest that it is the *mbondoro*, the *midzimu* and *Mwari* (rather than the lions considered for instance to be manifestations of the *mbondoro*) who are deemed to have human attributes and hence to answer to the requests for rain in the ceremonies.

Though some have found it incongruous that what they understood as primitive people had the idea of a Supreme Being (Opoku 1978), others have pointed out that the idea of a Supreme Being has nothing whatever to do with missionary influence, or with contact with Christians or even Muslims (Rattray 1969: 140). While A B Ellis could not accept that familiar religious ideas found in Africa were "native" in origin, holding that the idea of a Supreme Being among the Akan was a recent European importation (Chapman and Hall 1887 cited in Opoku 1978), others do not find the idea of a Supreme Being incongruous. For Rattray cited above, those who find it incongruous that the west African "negro" who seemed backward in most things should have so far progressed in religious development forget that the magnificent conception of a

“Supreme Deity” was not the prerogative of minds which we commonly consider the greatest of old-those of Greeks and the Romans, but was a conception of “primitive” people who lived after the pyramids were built but before the advent of Greece and Rome-the Bedouins of the Desert. So while some date African prophesy to periods after colonialism (Aquina 1967), some have noted that prophesy existed prior to colonialism but that African prophets were victimised and suppressed by colonial authorities who were anxious that the prophets led rebellions against them (Anderson and Johnson 1995, Chigwedere 1991, Hansen 1995, Setiloane 1976: 92). Though some church members in churches in which I participated were scornful of healers and mediums, other scholars have noted ways in which African independent churches such as Apostolic churches and Zionist churches suggest Christianised versions of tradition or traditional versions of Christianity or ways in which the independent churches are an attempt to link traditional practices and Christianity (Shoko 2012). Other scholars have noted ways in which “spirit” mediums who played roles in the rebellion against colonial authorities were labelled witchdoctors (Chigwedere 1991, Nyathi 2001, Ranger 1969). The *midzimu* that for Burbridge (1924) are not demons but gods, distinguishable from *mashavi* “spirits” from deceased belonging to foreigners, were labelled as demons. Colonial authorities had difficulties translating aspects of *chivanhu* resulting in them calling *n’anga* “bone throwers” even if they threw *hakata* (which were wooden rather than bones), and even if such a title as “bone throwers” lacked the implications of healing, knowledge of herbs and support in times of calamity which formed the mainstay of the *midzimu* and the *n’anga* (Jeater 2007). The *n’anga* were labelled “witchdoctors” even if their main work exceeded matters of witchcraft. *Chiremba*, the vernacular term for *n’anga* in Mt Silinda was translated back into English as “native doctors skilful with *hakata*” even though some did not even throw *hakata* when divining. Colonial officials sought to undermine the legitimacy of *n’anga* through mission schools, through organising professional associations which could censure colleagues who referred patients to *n’anga* and insult patients who used medicines from *n’anga* (Chavunduka 1986 cited in Waite 2000). Through legislation such as Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) of the 1960s communal gatherings were prohibited and these included the dance festivals (Hadebe 2001 cited in Waite 2000) which formed the basis of *chivanhu*.

On the basis of *chivanhu* and against the background that some of its modes of engagements have been



formally recognised through the work of *n'anga* in matters of health (Waite 2000, Chavunduka 1997, Simmons 2012) and in matters of prosecuting witches (Zimbabwean Criminal Law (Codification and Reform Act of 2006), this dissertation seeks to explore the import of *chivanhu* in villagers' modes of surviving violence in Zimbabwe. The idea of surviving violence is not meant to imply that villagers always struggled as much as they did during the period of the crises in Zimbabwe. If to survive is understood, as I do in this thesis, in terms of the vernacular term *kurarama*, it assumes wider import, that is, it refers to life more broadly (whether lived well or in suffering). The vernacular term *kutambura* is narrower and refers to life lived in suffering. But in *chivanhu*, even if one is living well, one will still be enjoined to continue struggling, if for the sake of other *hama* in the families. In the light of critiques of dominant epistemologies which have been argued to have resulted in the colonisation of African knowledge and to continue to take leading roles in shaping what constitutes progressive global values imposed on the African people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 11) the dissertation seeks to contribute to the discourse on knowledge and decolonisation. Though the focus is on *chivanhu*, the villagers' modes of engagement were also impacted upon by other forms of knowledge including the conventional epistemologies which other scholars have understood as modernist. So while much of the modes of engagement offer opportunities to interrogate what are deemed as modernist epistemologies, there are instances in everyday life where villagers appear to have drawn from such epistemologies to survive. In this sense the modernist epistemologies can not simply be critiqued. There were indeed, among the villagers modes of engagement which although relying on distancing the self from others can not be simply assigned to modernist binaries implied in the epistemologies. Modes of survival that involved distancing oneself from perpetrators of violence and seeking refuge elsewhere could be interpreted as reliance on dichotomisation, in evading violence, but such modes of surviving violence can not simply be categorised as modernist. In this sense, victims of violence simply sought refuge in different places where they could avoid contact with perpetrators. Matters of avoiding contact with others are also traceable in *chivanhu* where during rain petitioning ceremonies (*mukwerera*) breast feeding women were not allowed to attend (Gelfand 1959) so *chivanhu* can not be romanticised as absolutely free of modes of engagement that could at least approximate dichotomies, however less rigid as indicated by the reflexivity in the everyday life modes of engagement. The

modes of engagement by the villagers, in so far as they entailed borrowing from diverse epistemologies, can be understood in terms of what Stengers (2010) calls ecologies of practices that help to define relational heterogeneity. The ecologies of practices involve situations that relate heterogeneous protagonists or heterogeneous things even as the terms diverge. In this sense, I contend that the issue is not to settle a priori on singular modes of explaining the world but to also reckon ways in which different modes of engagement with the world play out together. It is the aim of this thesis to look at ways in which such different ways of engaging with the world played out in Buhera.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The broad aim of this dissertation is to explore how villagers survived violence in the context of *chivanhu* and the kinds of ontologies and epistemologies that are implied in it. The objectives specific to the chapters are to explore how villagers survived droughts and to examine the ways in which they related the droughts to violence in Zimbabwe's past and present. The thesis also explores villagers' modes of surviving violence, the ways in which they sensed and knew about the likelihood of outbreaks of violence and the ethical issues that undergirded their relations of *ukama*. The thesis also explores ways in which villagers survived economic hardships as well as ways in which they survived illness in the context of the hardships.

Beginning with a chapter on ways in which villagers understood and responded to the recurrent droughts which were also interpreted in terms of violence helps explore how different entities in the environment were held to be connected in ways that help re-engage ideas on the social contract in discourses on governance. But in so far as the villagers' modes of responding to the droughts also entailed engagements with different epistemologies, the chapter also offers opportunities to explore connections between different epistemologies bearing on matters of rains and droughts. To appreciate the theoretical orientation of the thesis, it is important to outline the approaches that inform it.

## Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

In thinking through the issues raised in this dissertation, I rely on explications from literature on relational ontologies in so far as they offer tools to understand ways in which violence can be survived. I also rely on the field-data to explore ways in which the theories can be informed by the ethnography. The concerns raised by some scholars about the ambiguity of relations (in relational ontologies) which could be sexual, aesthetic, mechanical, technical, theological, logical, moral, imaginary, physical (Wildman 2006), are important to factor into the analysis of modes of engagements in *chivanhu* among the villagers in rural Zimbabwe. Further concerns are that if we say relations are ontologically primary then we need to specify what kind of relations are ontologically primary because there is a host of decisions to make on the basis of whether the relations are axiological, logical, perceptual, causal, conceptual (Wildman *ibid*). The third concern by Wildman is that there is need to know whether relations between entities are more fundamental than the entities themselves and whether they are not mere attributions made by conscious entities capable of expressing them in language.

While animistic relational ontologies presuppose the immanence in the cosmologies that presuppose that there is power immanent to matter (Albert 2001), the doctrine of univocity which explains the hylozoic cosmologies (presupposing immanence) have been critiqued by some scholars. The critique has been that if being is said in one and the same sense of everything, there is need to explain what constitutes differences between things (see for instance Smith 2001). This can in essence be read to refer to the issue that if God for instance is deemed to be immanent in every creature then what would constitute the differences between the creatures. Relational ontologies in this sense are useful in thinking through issues of difference and sameness as well as of hierarchy in respect of *chivanhu*. While some scholars have posited that relational ontologies are rhizomatic with no hierarchies (Law 2006, Latour 2005), other scholars writing on Africa have suggested that there are hierarchies and boundaries for instance not only with respect to different epistemologies but in matters of citizenship and belonging, often resulting in xenophobia (see for instance Nyamnjoh 2006, 2005, 2007, 2012).

In this dissertation I draw insights from Ingold's (2006, 2007, 2012, 2011) work particularly his rendering of life in terms of meshworks of entangled lines, his explications on becomings and his ideas on things and

material objects including the need to shift focus from congealed objects to fluxes and flows of life. But Ingold's (1993, 2010) argument, that we live in an open world with no inside and outside, and that knowing is a matter of wayfaring, that is, going along which is open ended, needs to be interpreted against restrictions on movement particularly in contexts of violence. The limitations on movement imply restrictions to flows as well as limitations to connections in such contexts of violence and in a world separated by borders. I also draw on insights from literature on animism particularly from Descola (1996), Garuba (2013) and Bird-David (1999) but the literature will be interpreted against African cosmologies as they appear in ethnography as well as in the field site where I carried out research. Some insights will also be drawn from Latour's Actor-Network Theory (2005) but I will be mindful of the fact that he developed his theory for tracing normativity in techno-scientific networks (Waelbers 2011) therefore there could be some differences with my own context in rural Zimbabwe. As is evident in Ingold's and Latour's work on meshworks and Actor-Networks respectively there is some differences in that while Ingold emphasises not the materialities but fluxes and flows, Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) was built from semiotics of materiality (see for instance Law 2006). Though thinking with the idea of networks is useful it has been argued by some that the network metaphor impoverishes our understanding of power (Prey 2012). It is blind to relationships of exploitation that need attention in a world that is increasingly connected but remains wedded to the exploitation of surplus value. Other scholars such as Castells (2000) Hardt and Negri (2004) cited in Prey (2012) posit the network as the dominant form power takes in contemporary society. Other scholars like Brown and Capdevila (2006) have argued that the concept of force underpins networks because networks are assemblages of forces; they emerge from and dissolve into the play of power, power is what makes networks what they are, and what eventually is responsible for their collapse. Still others have argued that Latour's ideas are rich but poor from an ethical point of view (Waelbers and Dorstewitz 2013). For Waelbers and Dorstewitz (2013), the doings of things and people are, in Latour's work, couched in one and the same behaviourist (third person) vocabulary without giving due recognition to the ethical relevance of human intelligence, sympathy and reflection in the making of responsible choices. For this reason Latour (2006: 16) pointed out that the Actor-Network Theory has been critiqued for proposing the "death of man" involving

dissolving humanity into a field of forces where morality and psychology were absent. In spite of Actor-Network Approach attempts to bridge the binaries between subjects and objects, other scholars have pointed out that the hypothesis in the approach is not universally applicable. Callon (2006) for instance has argued that a market opposes buyers and sellers, and that a market is a challenge to ANT because it introduces a strict separation between what circulates (goods which are inert, passive and classified as nonhuman) and human agents who are active and capable of making complicated decisions. Whereas Latour focuses on action other scholars have argued that life experiences do not refer merely to acts, events and happenings but also to general frameworks of meaning, world views and institutions which guide, synthesise and order the process of experiencing itself (Heller 1990: 44). It is important to note for purposes of this dissertation that while the work of other scholars on animism suggests immanence of for instance souls in entities, Ingold's (2007, 2008) open world (being a world of becomings, fluxes and flows) is more open and accommodative of processes in the world-in-form. However whereas flows and fluxes are emphasised by some, other scholars have argued that everyday life consists of both constant and variable features which are intertwined (Heller). Indeed Ingold (2011) recognised the limits of fluidity when he argued that in an animate world everything is movement and nothing is certain but fluidity also has its limits, its stoppages and its moments of consolidation. Openness in the capitalist world market, with no inside and outside, has been critiqued as a model for imperial sovereignty (Maurer 2004: 63) that stresses openness of the world for capital even as citizens in various parts of the world are obsessed with borders and boundaries occasioning xenophobic tendencies as indicated above (see for instance Nyamnjoh 2006). The section on methodology also shows some ways in which villagers were not open to be interviewed, that is, they turned down my requests to participate in the interviews.

## **Methodology**

Lefebvre's (2000) assertion, that ambiguity is a category of everyday life of which reality is never exhausted since from everyday life situations springs forth actions, events and results without warning, could not have been more apt to a field site where the eruption of violence was part of the possibilities of everyday life.

Scholars who have researched on violence have characterised such sites where social relationships and cultural realities are critically modified by the pervasion of fear, the threat of force or irregular application of violence as dangerous fields (Pottier et al 2011). Researching such dangerous field carries multiple risks that necessitate the consideration of calculated strategies whereby the gain of credible information outweighs the risks of personal harm to the researcher and informants.

Such risks attendant to entering a field site of violence appeared just before I headed off from the capital city of Harare to the field site. I received an sms (text message on my mobile phone), from one of my brothers, indicating that, if I was heading off to Buhera, I had to be careful because there was political violence in the villages. Carefulness was however a thing that could not be easily executed as it entailed that I postpone the fieldwork indefinitely, that is, for as long as the violence was on. But it also meant I had to redefine and re-plan my fieldwork so as to minimise the possibilities of encountering violence while I worked in the site. For this reason I spent the first two months of my fieldwork period outside the context of the field site. When I eventually entered the field site I decided to spend some time watching processes as well as establish networks with some villagers that could allow me to have fall back positions. Beginning by watching processes in everyday life allowed me to gain some acceptance as well as information about villagers' own modes of surviving the risks of violence that could be useful in my own ways of surviving it. As Pottier et al cited above noted researchers of conflict do not control the setting they work in but rather rely on "local" intelligence, knowhow and protection. Eventually I was invited by some of the villagers to their churches, to divination sessions, to ceremonies and to sessions where they received donations from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Some even invited me to village meetings such as the one with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) where issues about the villagers' gardens were discussed. In this way, I was able to begin some participant observation where I relied on jotting short notes that enabled me to reconstruct the interactions, conversations and events much in the way explicated by Field and Morse (1995: 112).

### **Participant Observation**

The participant observation involved prayers in the African Independent Churches including visits to such

places like mountains for prayers with church members. They also involved sharing dreams with church members and often during sessions when prophets in the churches interpreted the dreams. Participant observation also included my attendance in prayer sessions when I was taken ill toward the end of my fieldwork. Much as in van Binsbergen's (2003) case where he allowed himself to be captured as a patient of Southern African *sangomas*, I became a patient of the apostolic churches one of which had incidentally prophesied my illness one and a half years before it materialised. On the day of the first prophesy about the illness, I had visited one old man in the village who I had previously met and had traced a relationship between him and me. Twenty minutes into my conversation with the old man I saw apostolic church members arriving at his homestead. After the old man had informed me that there was going to be a church service at his homestead, I expressed my keenness to participate in the service during which it was prophesied that I would fall ill one and a half years on. Prophecies about the illness were made in the different apostolic churches in which I participated during the course of the fieldwork. The *n'anga* and *svikiro* mediums who I met during interviews in the fieldwork also warned that I would be afflicted by an illness of which configurations tallied in all their descriptions. Participation in this sense allowed me to understand how witchcraft related violence was conceptualised and dealt with in the churches and by *n'anga* and mediums.

Such a reflexive moment can be understood in terms of Hastrup's (1995) argument that the reality of fieldwork is a liminal phase for both subject and object in which the distinction between them is dissolved. While reflexivity can be effected by using observation and other methods in which interaction is kept to a minimum reducing the effects of researchers on their results, reflexivity can also be enhanced on the basis of a very high level of interaction based on complete participation (Davies 2009). My complete participation in the sessions had the shortcoming that it deepened by sense of loss of control of the situation that involved grappling with matters of dealing with witchcraft related issues. However the experiences shifted me to different realities and practices of the field site. It allowed me to, as Marcus (1998) argues have a sense of different world one which is accessible to western commonsense and the other intractably not so assigned (the unseen) to matters of belief. Participating in informants' world of dreams is one such way of joining their different worlds from which I learnt about their modes of engagements.

Partly because there were fewer *n'anga* and mediums than there were churches and partly because when I was taken ill I spent more time with churches than *n'anga* and mediums, my involvement with apostolic churches appears longer than with *n'anga* and mediums. Participation in all the various kinds of churches in the modes of participation demanded by in-depth fieldwork such as this, would have entailed an even longer period of fieldwork than envisaged.

### **Sampling and Unstructured Interviews**

The sampling was mainly purposive with a focus more on information rich cases from Apostolic churches, healers and medium, as well as other villagers who had encountered violence. Four *n'anga* were interviewed, two male and two female. One *svikim* medium was also interviewed in relation to surviving drought and the ceremonies conducted. Interviewees ranged in age between eighteen to ninety years. These interviewees were drawn from a total of six villages in selected wards in Buhera. A total of ninety three interviewees, of which fifty were male and forty three were females were selected. Among the interviewees were village school teachers, Agricultural Extensions Services officer in the village, other interviewees were carpenters, builders, nurses, vendors, weavers and peasant farmers in the villages. Also five prophets of apostolic churches were interviewed. Three meteorological services officers were interviewed in connection with meteorological services intervention in times of droughts. I also did participant observation including viewing and interpreting the synoptic charts, statistics by meteorological officers, their apparatuses including rain gauges, radiosondes and processes of electrolysis to produce hydrogen which was used in radiosondes.

The villagers' interviews were unstructured, which permitted the respondents to freely narrate their encounters with intermittent sub-questions being asked by the researcher from time to time so as to clarify issues. Sometimes the respondents offered to connect the researcher in the snowballing manner, with their colleagues who had also encountered violence.

### **Other Sources of data**

Useful information was also accessed from grey literature including from the media and the Zimbabwe



Parliamentary Debates in the Hansard. Some of the useful information was derived from the Zimbabwe National Archives. I also walked across mountains such as the Gombe, and along some rivers and to villagers' fields.

## **Ethics**

As Pottier et al (2011: 12) argue researching in conflict situations requires the researcher to think on his/her feet, changing research plans, designs and developing *ad hoc* solutions to minimise risk and damage on a day by day, sometimes moment by moment basis. In my own research in the conflict ridden villages, research plans had to be constantly adjusted on account of refusal by informants to offer consent and for the reason that the moments proved too risky. One example was when I intended in the early part of my fieldwork to interview a healer I had heard about in the village. Upon arriving at the healer's village I was well received by the elderly female healer who I found sitting in her yard together with her elderly husband. She asked me whether I wanted to interview her or her ancestor who possessed her. I requested to speak to her as well as her ancestor where upon she said speaking to her ancestor required an intermediary. Unable to locate her daughter-in-law who she held to good at being an intermediary, she fetched her son who arrived thirty minutes later. Upon arrival her son, who appeared to be ill-tempered even in his conversations with his parents rather rudely asked me what I wanted, which was in fact a question perfectly in order. But when I replied that I wanted to interview his mother's ancestor, he equally rudely asked me what for. I responded indicating that I was a student researching on matters of surviving violence to which he asked me what I would want to do with that information. I responded that I was going to write a PhD thesis on the basis of the information to which he responded by saying, "*handizvigoni*" (I can not do that). His parents tried to persuade him saying that his role would be simply to intermediate and nothing else but he responded rather rudely asking his parents, "*ndati kudiiko nbai baba?*" (What have I said to you father?).

This incident could not have been as surprising in a context where villagers and families had been divided along political lines resulting in ill-temper even between family members but it is quite another thing for a researcher to be part of such a context in which one would be at a loss as to how to mediate between parents and children. Wanting to interview members of different political parties in a context of conflicts is itself

tricky in that the researcher can unknowingly be deemed to have assumed a side when they are seen interviewing or wanting to interview opponents. There is a lot of suspicion in such contexts and so it is often tricky to do interviews. Though I decided to resolve the heated argument between the son and his parents by informing them that it was perfectly ok to decline to participate and bidding them good bye, another incident occurred in which I requested a villager for an interview after which request the man and I withdrew to a place away from the earshot of other villagers for the interview. However after the interview I met the villager together with other men. Rather than maintain reticence about my previous interview with him, the former interviewee informed me that the men with whom he was at the same place were his opponents. He stated that they were his opponents who had wanted to kill him so if they had any thing to say about their violence they could say it to me so that I recorded their responses. In spite of my having informed him that I was more interested in how villagers survived violence than in identifying who violated who, the man hinted that if his opponents saw me with him, they would harass me. Because my intention was not to worsen relations between villagers but rather to research on how violence was survived, I quickly decided on a way that would bring the opposing villagers together so that they could at least have something to share and realise that it was possible for them to cooperate rather than oppose each other. My decision was to buy them two litres worth of beer so that they could share. My former informant then smiled and remarked that he would even share his cigarette with the opponents even though they wanted to kill him.

These ethical issues can be understood in terms of riddles about how to maintain a position of neutrality in a politically and emotionally charged environment (Pottier et al 2011) as well as how to think beyond the often legalistic protocols in research ethics which often offer inadequate guarantees of ethical research (Ross 2005). My approach was to cultivate sensitivity including the capacity to suspend a particular approach and (re)configure when to listen, speak and when to maintain silence (see also Henderson 2005), how to defray potential outbreaks of violence and what tools to use in so doing. In a context pervaded by apprehensiveness of danger from using pieces of technology such as cameras and voice recorders which were also used by some civil society organisation and villagers to record and send report of violence, I had to desist from using the same. My decision to desist from using them was partly because it risked me being identified with other

people and organisations simply fishing for incidences of violence to circulate in the world. In a village context where such technologies voice recorders and cameras were not as common using them generated the apprehension by villagers about the identities of their voices and persons beyond the contexts of the villages and the interviews.

Though some of the villagers indicated that I could reveal their names, I have retained anonymity by using pseudonyms because revealing the names of the individuals risked possibilities of broader connections being easily traceable. In writing up, I have deliberately decided not to disclose geographical and personal data that would make it possible to trace the informants. During the fieldwork I took care to keep my research notes out of the field site so as to prevent the risk of opponents stumbling on them and using them for purposes of fanning violence. To enhance my own safety, I maintained contact with my supervisors back in Cape Town via the mobile phone. Although it was not easy to maintain contact via the mobile phone in a context haunted by absence of or poor coverage of network and in a context where there is no electricity, the moments of contact I had proved useful in emotional and intellectual senses. The chapters in the thesis are described below.

## **Chapter Outlines**

In Chapter One I look at how villagers engaged in *kukumbira mvura* (petitioning) for rain. This chapter focuses on how villagers survived the recurrent droughts in Zimbabwe by performing rituals conventionally but erroneously understood as “rain making ceremonies”. It situates the droughts in the context of the violence by drawing on ways in which villagers connected the occurrences of droughts to violence in the past and the present. Drawing on the fieldwork, I call the ceremonies rain petitioning ceremonies instead of “rainmaking” because the villagers asserted that they request for rather than make rain as portrayed in existing literature. Drawing on some theoretical debates on relational ontologies, I explicate the webs of connections of different things in the rain petitioning ceremonies. I follow up these partial connections in chapter three where I explore the vernacular idea of *ukama* modes of relating.

Chapter Two focuses on matters of knowing and sensing violence. The chapter looks at how villagers knew and sensed violence in a context where there was dearth of newspapers, radios, television sets, internet and such other kinds of media. It explores how villagers relied on dreams, divination and prophecies to sense and know about violence at a distance, that is, without actually physically involving themselves in it. In this sense it interrogates matters of “formal” truth, reality, objectivity and rationality. It argues that much more than these epistemic “formalities” is required to survive violence in everyday life. Drawing on the vernacular conceptualisations of *mbepo/mweya* (wind/air) as central to matters of knowing through dreams, divination and prophecies, I challenge the notions that their knowledge can simply and narrowly be defined as local and traditional.

Chapter Three focuses on *ukama* (relationships) as modes of survival. This chapter argues using the notions of (*mbepo/mweya*) that portrayals of *ukama* in terms of blood and affinal kinship are narrow. What circulates in *ukama* is not only blood and marriage related aspects but also the *mweya/mbepo* that connects different kinds of things and temporalities. In view of the broader connections via the *mweya/mbepo* between different things in the world the chapter then interrogates matters of ethics where *ukama* is conceptualized more broadly than has been portrayed in literature. It examines what an ethics based on notions of the *mweya/mbepo* might contribute to rethinking violence particularly in a context where the rule of law has broken down and can no longer guarantee security of citizens. This idea of *ukama* is discussed in the context of issues arising from debates on ontologies including the “nature-culture” divide and the subject-object divide that have been traced to modernist epistemologies and ontologies.

Chapter Four focuses on what I call Economies of *kutenda* (to thank) which is crucial in the giving and receiving within *ukama*. The chapter focuses on how villagers survived economically or materially and how their modes of survival might be used to rethink matters of openness in economies. It explores the villagers’ understandings of matters of the economy in relation to the environment upon which they survived.

Chapter Five focuses on Sensing Presences: Illness, Health and Survival. Drawing on some theoretical debates on senses and sensing, the chapter problematises the dominant conventional categorisation of senses as five and the attendant privileging of some ways of sensing. It argues that there are different ways of sensing

the presence of things such as illness and illness causing things and that there is need to take into cognizance different ways of sensing things which may themselves be engaged in complex processes of comings and goings. Privileging the sense of sight as modernist representational epistemologies do assumes that things always render themselves to the gaze yet in a world of complex comings and goings things are often elusive to the gaze but nevertheless retain their presence. The conclusion refocuses on *chivanbu* and ways in which it plays out with selected tenets in theorizations on relational ontologies. It spells out the partial connections between *chivanbu* and relational ontologies, and then suggests how the modes of engagement in *chivanbu* can be theorized.



## Are Petitioners Makers of Rain?

### Rains, Worlds and *Kukumbira* in Conflict-Torn Buhera, Zimbabwe

In drought-battered Zimbabwe the universality of meteorological scientific facts explaining the droughts was open to contestations, often in the public media in which the droughts were explained partly in terms of the violence that characterised Zimbabwe's history. These explanations suggest that matters of causation of droughts are far from having been settled once and for all among the citizens of Zimbabwe. One comment in the media explained the droughts in terms of the El Nino building up in the Pacific: *Zimbabwe: Experts predict drought* (The Herald, Harare 20 July 2009) but this explanation was contested by other accounts premised on the linkages between the droughts and the perpetration of violence in the country. The other explanations were that the droughts could only be averted by recourse to "traditional" ceremonies including *mukwerera* (literary meaning a request for rain but commonly known as "rainmaking") and "traditional" cleansing ceremonies to cleanse the nation of blood spilt during the liberation war fought in the 1970s: *Negation of Traditional Values Blasted* (The Herald, Harare 20 January 2003; *Zim "needs" cleansing ritual* (News 24.com AFP Special Report 28 April 2009: 13:19).

While the explanations of the droughts in terms of the El Nino offered conventional scientific accounts, literature on Zimbabwean ethnography indicates that there are other ways of accounting for the droughts that link the everyday life of human beings to the environment and to politics. In Zimbabwe droughts have been explained by some citizens in terms political and other conflicts deemed to disrupt the relations between human beings and entities held to be guardians (such as the *mbondoro* clan ancestors) of the environment (Vuijhuizen 1997, Daneel 1998). People in Matabeleland region for instance have charged national leaders with neglecting the rain shrines after they came to power. Critics argue that, they failed to report to shrines to thank "spirits" and *Mwali* for their support in the liberation struggle, and charge that in failing to offer

apologies for violence, they failed to lead the way in cleansing the nation of the effects of war (Alexander et al 2000; see also Chigodora 1997, Kane 1954: 101-2 for a history of such allegations traceable to the early colonial encounters). The fact that the Shona people were informed, by the *mbondoro* speaking through the mediums, of their offences considered to have resulted in droughts (Bourdillon 1976, Gelfand 1956) underscores ways in which offences were held not merely as against the state but also against the *mbondoro* guardians of the environment. Such contentions, that environmental disasters result from acts of witchcraft, incest, political conflicts, disrespect for ancestors, disobedience of the *mbondoro* (Ranger 2003) appear to be contrary to the notion of the social contract, at least in its secular renderings. However if read against Bodin's (1992) argument that, as for "divine" and "natural law", every prince on earth is subject to them and it is not in their power to contravene them unless they wish to be guilty of treason against God and to war against Him, it is clear how the sovereign in a social contract was understood to be controlled by such laws in matters of governance. Though Hobbes' idea of a social contract was secular, his argument about the "law of nature" and that the "law of nature" was the law of God suggests that it is understood as divinely promulgated moral requirement (Dobos 2012). The "law of nature" for Hobbes, suggested that there is morality beyond justice, that is, a morality that did not presuppose or depend on the existence of a social contract.

Though churches failed to reconcile the conflicting political parties in Zimbabwe, the comments by some Members of Parliament indicated that they considered justice not merely in terms of the social contract but in terms of God's interventions. One Member of Parliament for instance remarked that: "...there is in fact a sovereign God who desires justice". He went further to state: "Mr Speaker, we are all subject to that God none of us is exempt. We can heckle as long as we like, all of us are subject to God. We can subvert justice in this nation, we can fail to prosecute murderers in this nation but ultimately all of us will face judgement" (Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates 16 March 2010: p 552)

Though the idea of "natural law" in Hobbes' terms presumes moral-political space beyond politics, the presupposition that God's law is "natural law" is not supported in contexts where *Mwari*, as creator (*musiki* in vernacular), is deemed as not immanent in "nature" (*zvisekwa*/creations in vernacular or Shona language) but as capable of using the *zvisekwa* as vehicles through which He exercises his influence when He manifests in



the human world. Though scholars like Hobbes presume understandings of God in terms of “nature”, some scholars writing on Zimbabwe have pointed out that in times of droughts citizens appealed to special *mbondoro* clan ancestor and guardian of the environment that they considered to intercede between living human beings and *Mwari* (Gelfand 1962, also Daneel 1970).

Different scholars have had different understandings of modes of engagement, related to the environment, in Africa. The African modes of engagement have been portrayed by some scholars as presupposing animism with Okri (1997: 132) for instance arguing that: “the gods of scientific certainty are yet to listen to the speech of poisoned dolphins, the cries of the stratosphere, the howls of the deforested earth, and the screams of people without hope and without food”. On the other hand, other scholars have argued that the category of animism has been wrongly applied to Africa (Opoku 1978). Defined as the endowment of “natural beings” with human dispositions and social attributes, and sometimes attributing to animals culture, habits, rituals, songs, dances of their own (Descola 1996), animism presupposes the consideration that animals and other things are considered to be persons. While some scholars have considered the increased invocation of the category animism by environmental/ecological movements as deriving from indigenous communities, postmodernism’s relativistic epistemologies, new age spiritualism and contemporary anthropologists speaking of relational epistemologies and different conceptions of personhood across cultures (Garuba 2013: 43), other works suggest animism can be traced to modernist thinking. Writing about relational metaphysics, for instance, Oliver (1981) cites Ludwig Feuerbach who argued that the “Being” in him did not presuppose that “man” owed his origin and existence to God (in his terms a mystical, indeterminate, ambiguous entity). Rather Feuerbach considered the “Being” in him to suggest that the origin and existence of “man” was in nature (which was for him more concrete and determinate than the idea of God as separate from nature). In this sense, considerations of “nature” as a being appear to be traceable to scientific philosophy or naturalism (Kincaid 2013) and to cosmologies that presume God is immanent in nature (Smith 2001, Pearson 2001, Bryden 2001). So while some have used the term animism to refer to “an epistemological standpoint in relation to the world that is radically different from the modernist position” (Garuba 2013: 47), others have

suggested that it is a product of European eighteenth century deism when “nature” became the polite word for God (Evensky 2005).

Apart from debates in philosophy in which some argue that animals are a paradigm for property as God gave man dominion over the lower beasts, that reason and language gave human beings the capacity to contract and therefore to escape the state of “nature” characterised by constant material threats or that animals are “moral patients” who are worthy of consideration but of not the same sort as human moral agents (Rasmussen 2011: 105) there are other critiques of animism in Africa. Some have argued that Africans do not believe that every object without exception has a soul but believe that “spirits” can have certain objects as their habitat or abode and can be embodied or attached to material objects (Opoku 1978, also Rattray 1927: 2-3, Fontein 2006: 88, Bullock 1927). Contrary to Frazer’s (1926) work on animisms portraying what were understood as primitive people as worshipping objects of nature, Gelfand (1970) argued when writing about the Shona that the Shona do not pray to animals or inanimate objects even though they believe that “spirits” may rest in certain trees: as Gelfand notes, the Shona may name a bull in remembrance of their family elder but they never pray to it though special care is taken of sacred animals.

In Africa where the worlds of ancestors and the human worlds are held to be parallel (Fontein 2006, also Fardon 1990, Burbridge 1923, 1924, Bernard 2003, 2007) though sharing liminal spaces where the ancestral worlds and the human worlds interweave particularly on ritual occasions (Fontein 2006), the African cosmologies present opportunities to interrogate connections between worlds. The underworlds of *njuzu/madzimudzangara* (entities manifesting as fish, half-fish, half-human, and also as *mbepo/mweya*) considered to live in mine chasms of some mountains, rifts of rock, perennial springs, craigs and cliffs and in dry areas beneath the seas and waterfalls (Bernard 2003, 2007, Burbridge 1923, 1924) were considered, along with entities such as *mbondoro*, to be subject to petitions. The aid of healers and mediums, that helped petition the entities, was sought in the times of crises, such as the droughts and the violence. Different people in Africa conceive the worlds of the departed that are petitioned as lying in different places. For the San, the abode of the deities or spirits of the dead is above in the sky or heaven where God, the lesser deity and spirits of the dead humans constitute the heavenly beings (Westerlund 2006: 39). Other people in Africa consider the

abode of the dead variously in terms of the underworld, netherworld, on the moon, the stars, the sun (Mbiti 1970: 145, 147, 257, 258). Such worlds as conceived in everyday life escape the conventional classification of worlds in terms of stages of development yet the worlds appear to have significant import in everyday life.

This chapter dwells on the idea of *mukwerera*, the problems that attend its translation, as “rainmaking”, in dominant epistemologies and the ways in which droughts were interpreted in the context of violence. It explores the kinds of relationships, including with the environment, that were cultivated by villagers in Buhera, Zimbabwe, in their everyday life and in struggles to survive droughts. In this sense, it similarly explores the kinds of connections that meteorological sciences have with the world and what these connections mean in rethinking conflict in the world. By exploring *mukwerera* and meteorological sciences, the intention is not to suggest that they are opposed but to highlight partial connections between them as ways of coping with droughts in Zimbabwe, and Buhera in particular. The chapter also looks at what is understood as *ukama*, or variants of relationships that were relied upon in petitioning and in modes of survival more broadly, and asks what these might mean for rethinking human-environment relationships in ways that assist in managing conflicts and polarisations not only between human beings but also between worlds.

### **The Worlds, Entities and Knowledge Practices Related to Droughts and Rains**

While the relations between Zimbabwe and the western countries were frozen in a polemic that pitted the Zimbabwean President against Britain and by extension Africa against the West, villagers in Buhera related with entities of different kinds in their everyday life practices. Everyday life among the villagers such as healers and mediums was lived on the basis of open relations between human beings and other entities in the environment. Interviews I had with village heads Samuel and Bere, *mbuya* Magaya (a healer) and Monica (a villager under Samuel’s headmanship) indicated that human beings were connected and related not only to other human beings but also to the *njuzu*, that manifested as half-human and half-fish or in the terms of other villagers as wind, that live under water; human beings were also considered in such villagers’ conceptions to be connected to their invisible ancestors. From the *njuzu* human beings were considered to get *ruzwi* (see also MacGregor 2003, Mawere and Wilson 1995, Daneel 1995), including a form of expertise for healing ailments,

and the *njuzu* were also considered to be present in some streams, rivers, pools and springs which did not dry out even in the years of severe droughts. However when humans violated the *njuzu* by using dirty, sooty or metal containers to fetch water from such rivers, springs, pools or streams, the *njuzu* migrate away in the form of “localized” whirlwind and the places subsequently run dry, since the springs, rivers, pools or streams were considered by the *svikiro* medium to be “*pamisha*”, that is, the villages or headquarters of the *njuzu*. Villagers reported hearing sounds of cows mooing, sounds of drumming, singing and whistling under such rivers, streams, pools or springs which were home to the *njuzu*. It is the character of *ukama* relations, as I will explain later in this chapter, with both the *njuzu* and *mbondoro* that were considered to affect rains or to bring about droughts.

The idea of understanding and seeking to modify weather conditions by relating with these entities would cause consternation to the “moderns”, written of here in Latour’s (2004) sense to mean those who rely on a “radical dualism between nature and cultures” which he calls the “Internal Great Divide”. Might it be possible to think with different versions of engaging with the world? When the villagers in Buhera speak of rivers as villages and headquarters of *njuzu* that also manifest themselves in the form of localized wind and as half-human and half-fish, and that sing and play drums just as humans do, it is worth exploring what such an approach offers as a way of thinking about what it is to know the world, rather than writing it off as mere “belief”, or as a cultural version of “nature” that stands as the opposite of a scientific and apparently “non-cultural” “nature”. I want to counterpose this with some thoughts about meteorological sciences of “rainmaking”, and the production of nature as objects with which one has extractive and indeed militarised relationships. Both of these approaches, I argue, are ways of making relationships in the world, that is, they are modes of translation or ways in which the logical relations between seemingly opposed sets of significations, concerns and interests are displaced within programmatic organisation of knowledge and actions (Brown and Capdevila 2006). Along with de Castro (2004), I argue to translate is to situate oneself in the spaces of the equivocation and to dwell there. To translate is to emphasise or potentialise the equivocation, that is, open and widen the space imagined not to exist between the conceptual languages in contact, a space that the equivocation precisely concealed.

Encounters in the early colonial period in Africa saw challenges of translation of different modes of engaging with the world and what transpired during these early encounters helped shape the contemporary understandings of the world. Endfield and Nash's (2002) paper for instance explores interactions and reactions, in the early colonial period, of missionaries and the people they encountered in African contexts of frequent droughts. The missionaries considered the introduction of irrigation technology and agricultural settlement as both moral and practical solutions to droughts but other scholars have noted that furrow irrigation predated the colonial period and had a long history in some parts of Zimbabwe (Manzungu and van der Zang 1996, Posselt 1935: 2). It is pointed out in Endfield and Nash (2002) that the missionaries regarded the work of the "rainmaker" as erroneous, a folly, and a curse, with the result that "rainmaking" was ridiculed and scorned as a simple absurdity too ridiculous for sober argument. In their turn the people encountered in the region by the missionaries, associated the droughts with the arrival of Europeans some of whom killed the Kings' animals such as the leopards associated with rains. The misunderstandings between the missionaries and the people they encountered in this case arose from the challenges of translation of the different modes of engagement with the world. Missionaries were meeting people who did not have (a radical) separation between "nature" and "culture", humans and nonhumans, "belief" and "knowledge". And they were meeting people who understood *Mwari* as manifesting on rocks, in caves such as in the Matopo Hills and in other aspects of the environment (Daneel 1970) and not through the Bible. But in spite of differences between some churches and villagers relying on *chivanhu*, scholars like Daneel (1987: 235) have noted that when towards the end of the rain season, "traditionalists" climb mountains (*kukwira makomo*) to communicate with the "tribal spirits", the Zionists and apostles too ascend the hills to ask the Christian God for rain by means of fasting, praying, preaching and prophecy. The prophetic leaders have found sufficient Biblical references to holy mountains to justify their adaptation to the "traditional" association of rain giving powers with mountains.

As will be explored below, the medium noted that they intercede between *Mwari* and the human beings yet churches contested this argument. The debates have been long standing with some scholars noting that the Shona people and other inhabitants encountered by colonial officials had the idea of God since the pre-

colonial era (Jeater 2007, Gelfand 1956, Bullock 1927, Mupftee 1969, Bullock 1950, Ntholi 2006, Abraham 1966). Other scholars have even gone to the extent of noting that the Shona had what others scholars erroneously understood as ordinary “tribal” *mbondoro* (such as Chaminuka, Nehanda, Goronga and Makwati) but were considered by the inhabitants as *vana vaMwari/abantwana BoMlimo* (children of *Mwari*) deemed to emanate directly from the godhead and therefore were not appeaseable by sacrifice and libation since they had not had mortal existence (Bullock 1950: 149). Other scholars like Posselt (1935: 27, 78) have noted that *Mwari* comprised a trinity with the father/*Mwari/Sororenyou*, the son (Urunje) and the mother (Bamarumbi or Banyanchaba). It was on the basis of this view that the guerrillas during the Second Chimurenga war argued that there was not qualitative difference between the salvific work of Christ (who they deemed the mediator for whites) and Chaminuka (who they deemed the mediator for blacks) (Daneel 2007: 346). So during the Chimurenga war, “they said prayers to Chaminuka but all in the name of God, the almighty father for the Shona people” (Kriger 1992).

Understanding God only in terms of the Word in the Bible partly explains the challenges of translation during and after the early encounters in that from the missionaries’ point of view God was separated from the environment (connecting with inhabitants only via the missionaries and via the Bible that they used) that He created, including from the African inhabitants. But for Africans, God and indeed other invisible entities were capable of manifesting in the environment within the human world in diverse ways. The contestations between missionaries and the people that they called rainmakers created enduring categories such as “rainmaker” and “rainmaking” which I will argue do not speak to the ways in which *mukwerera* are done in Buhera.

The concepts “rainmaking” and “rainmaker” for example erroneously imply that there is production or manufacturing of rain by villagers and that the *svikiro* mediums (conventionally called spirit mediums) are the makers or producers of the rains. The concepts further erroneously imply that the people who perform the ceremonies can put together or assemble all the ingredients to produce the rain much like what manufacturers might do when making things or objects. As I will argue below, the *mukwerera* ceremonies involved petitions for rain from the *mbondoro* beings understood to manifest in the form of *mweya/mbepo*. Although mention is

scantly made in some literature of requests to the *mweya/mhepo* for rain (see for instance Gelfand 1962) emphasis has often been placed on material “objects” used to make such requests such as rain stones (see for instance Dah-Lokonon 1997). Other scholars have focused on material objects such as sticks and stones and their symbolic imports in “rainmaking” (see for instance Sanders 2008). But then focusing on or beginning from material natural objects risks mistranslating what other scholars have called nonnaturalised metaphysics that operate without the constraints of science in terms of naturalised metaphysics that operate within the constraints of science. For scholars like Chakravartty (2013: 33) naturalised metaphysics is metaphysics that is inspired and constrained by the output of our best science. On the other hand, nonnaturalised metaphysics is not so constrained and it begins not invariably from materialities or from “natural” entities in the way science does. Naturalised metaphysics has scientific starting points and contexts so it is sensitive to scientific concerns. The starting points I contend should not be merely on the “objects” but on the *mweya/mhepo* of the *mbondoro* as understood by the petitioners for rain.

Contrary to what the concepts “rainmaking” and “rainmaker” suggest, villagers in Buhera did not engage in “rainmaking” but rather in petitioning for rain. Even the *svikiro* medium in Buhera did not profess to be a “rainmaker” or to engage in “rainmaking” as portrayed by other scholars (see for instance Chitehwe 1954, Gelfand 1962, and Vuihuizen 1997), elsewhere in Zimbabwe. In response to my question about what is commonly understood as “rainmaking” ceremonies, the *svikiro* said: *tinokumbira mvura kubva kumbepo*: “we request for rain from the wind”, that is, ancestors understood as intermediaries between God and humans. The word they used for the request for rain was *mukwerera*. They gathered, under the *muchakata* tree for the *mukwerera*, to petition for rain from the *mbondoro*. A petition being subject to action or inaction (delayed or otherwise) by the petitioned appears closer to the requests for rain, and the rain was not invariably regarded as an object, indeed children sang for rain so that it would fall and they could have plenty. The *mukwerera* were not simple requests; however as will be explained below, there had to be a number of people and other entities present to make the petitions effective. But children sometimes sang even as they herded cattle: “*mvura naya, naya tidye makavhu, mvura naya naya tidye mupunga*” (Rain, may you fall; rain, may you fall so that we can eat rice. Rain, may you please fall so that we can eat pumpkins). These modes of engagement with the

weather world were an acknowledgement of different forms of life of and in the *mweya/mhepo*, deemed as manifestations of the *mbondoro* capable of heeding petitions and intervening to make life possible through rain. The environment was understood differently (see also de la Cadena 2010) but this may simply be due to the fact that human beings understood it from different angles and so the different views do not reflect errors, irrationalities or failure of logic but different sides of the same thing. This implies that understandings of the world are necessarily partial depending on time and the place one begins to make an inquiry about it. For instance there are different conceptualisations of invisible entities in the environment. Interesting emerging ideas related to the weather from the natural sciences-to wit that the wind, the clouds and the rain are not merely physical phenomena but are full of biological life that is in the wind, the clouds and rain. There are bacteria understood as “rainmaking bacteria” which underscore varieties of life related to rains and droughts (National Geographic News 12 January 2009, Rainmaking Bacteria Ride Clouds to “Colonise” the Earth<sup>1</sup>; Louisiana State University, 29 February 2008, Evidence of Rainmaking Bacteria Discovered in Atmosphere and Snow<sup>2</sup>). Both the scientists and the *svikiro* mediums reveal that there are ordinarily invisible life forms which are crucial for precipitation though they differ in their characterisation of the life (in terms of bacteria and in terms of *mbondoro* ancestors) and the ways in which they engage with the life forms to enhance rainfall. To petition for rainfall the villagers in Buhera gathered under the *muchakata* tree and there were many *muchakata* (plural for *muchakata*) trees in the villages in spite of deforestation because villagers shied away from cutting the *muchakata* trees for reasons I will explain shortly. The *muchakata* trees under which they assembled for the petitioning of the *mbondoro* were not just trees but villages of the *mbondoro*. Similarly, some rivers and pools were regarded by the villagers as villages of *njuzu*. Although all *muchakata* trees were revered it was the particular *muchakata* tree under which *mukwerera* ceremonies were held which was given more importance because that was where ceremonies were conducted. For instance the *svikiro* said: “*panzvimbo idzodzvi pamisba yeva mwevanhu saka panotogara pachitsvairwa*” (such places are the villages of other people (referring here to *mbondoro* ancestral beings) so we regularly sweep them). It appears what they did was not a mere ceremony or ritual but a petition that interweaves worlds. During the performances the entities of the supposed past in the form of the *mbondoro* founders of the clan were regarded as present, petition-able and as manifesting their



presence by manifesting and speaking through the mediums or by appearing in the form of lions. Thus the performances operated outside rigid dichotomies in that humans/other entities, the past/present, the visible present/the invisible present were held to partake.

Although the ceremonies to petition for the rains were open to villagers, not all of them partook or stuck to the expectations of the *mbondoro* ancestor who was understood by some villagers to mediate between the villagers and God in the petitions for rain. Christians such as Brian and Maria who belonged to the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Apostolic sect of Masowe did not want to partake as they describe the ceremonies as *zvinhu zvemweya yetsvina* (things that are related to ill winds) so they preferred to pray for rain. Although they argued that they relied only on the Bible to pray, they also placed significance on place in the sense that their prayers for rains were done on the Gombe Mountain which as explained below was considered by some villagers as the abode of deceased people of the *hera* totem. In this way they sought to break from *chivanhu* but only succeeded partially. While the Pentecostals contended that they talk to God directly without using intermediaries such as ancestors, the *svikiro* medium and *mbuya* Magaya, a healer, had different views. From their points of view the church members simply replaced ancestors by preferring to use their leaders and prophets as intermediaries between them and God. These contentions resembled the arguments by Daneel (1987: 260) that in Africa the deceased prophets or messianic leaders return to influence their followers, just like ancestors' spirits remain involved in the weal and woe of their living descendants. In many ways these contestations by the villagers resembled contesting and often conflicting interpretations of the relations between Shona *mbondoro* and God (who has been known from pre-colonial times among the Shona as *Mwari*, *Musikavanhu*, *Nyadenga*, *Mutangakugara*, *Dzivaguru*, *Chikara* as Bourdillon (1976) reported). Some missionaries regarded the ways of the people they met in early colonial Zimbabwe as heathen and sought to reduce God to the word (see Jeater 2007) but other missionaries noted that *Mwari*'s attributes were those of God (Bullock 1927) only that among the Shona, the *mbondoro* mediated between *Mwari* and the people. For these reasons some high ranking *svikiro* mediums were considered by some scholars to have been the prophets rather than being "tribal" as alleged by other scholars (Mutswairo 1983, Gelfand 1956). In this sense some such *svikiro* mediums were likened by some scholars to the Bishops and Archbishops in a Christian society (Gelfand

1956: 17). Thus Crawford (1967: 87) argued: “For a person who believes in the *mbondoro*, the possession of a prophet of the Pentecostal churches by the spirit of God, Christ or the Apostles, appears in no way untoward”.

What both the Pentecostals and the rest of the villagers who attended the *mukwerera* ceremonies did appears to me to be petitioning for rain, but the difference lies in the terms they used to describe their actions (that is praying and *kukumbira* or requesting for rain). The practices are separated or different but related. These practices to avert droughts relied on relations between the visible and invisible entities such as ancestors for those who performed *mukwerera*, *ngirozi* from the heavenly world for those who prayed for rain from God. However the challenge, for scholars on translation, is that in such a village where members had different ways of engaging with the weather world is to make space in order for the different knowledge practices to be considered without a priori dismissals.

The petitions and requests were a mode of engagement in everyday life that was applied to humans and the *mbondoro* alike. Such petitions were used not only to request for providence but to navigate difference and conflicts between human beings and the expectations of the *mbondoro*. Among the villagers, difference was not invariably treated with indifference or opposition but often as an invitation to request: such requests and petitions constituted bridges across difference among humans and between them and other entities. I was struck by the fact that healers, and other villagers who were members of Pentecostal and apostolic churches did not just visit places such as sacred mountains, rivers, pools and groves without making requests or praying first. They prayed to request for permission to safely enter even before they begun their journeys to such places. They not only requested one another as church members to join in the visits to the places but they also requested other entities. In this regard some church members who on account of their affiliation to the church felt they could not participate in or contribute *rapoko* grain that was used in the *mukwerera* ceremonies, they made requests to the chief and to the *svikiro* medium so that they could be excused.

Altering modes of engagement in the world including relations within the human domain without petitioning other entities in domains connected often resulted in reprisals and disruption of relations of reciprocity among the entities in the environment. It was not just the relations between the visible entities that

mattered in the well being of human beings in Africa but the relations with the invisible entities also such as ancestors (see also White 2001) and for this reason the past is often played in the present as ways to honour the ancestors. In this sense, an emphasis on the linearity of time fractures relations of reciprocity within the environment and as Garuba (2013: 49) argues, “There is need to recognise the complex embeddedness of different temporalities, different discordant formations and different epistemological perspectives within the same historical moment”. My research suggest that rethinking modernity implies not only a focus on its notions of time but also of work: invisible entities such as *mbondoro* were regarded as working during some days to ensure that humans and other entities had rains and they rested on other days. Normally each *mbondoro* has a rest day during which he is honoured and villagers are not permitted to work on that day. Failure to observe the *chisi* rest-day resulted in reprimands from the *mbondoro*. One example as narrated to me by a number of villagers and by the *svikiro* medium was when in 2009, the chief failed personally to comply with the *mbondoro*’s expectations about the *mbondoro*’s *chisi* rest day. The *mbondoro*, speaking through his *svikiro* medium, reprimanded him and threatened to visit drought on the chief’s area, even if a small area in the chiefdom. Prior to 2009, the chief had altered the *chisi* rest day from Thursdays to Fridays because the chief’s father had died on a Friday so he sought to honour him. The *mbondoro* founder of the clan was very angry about this change and, speaking through his medium, he summoned the chief and told him that it would not rain in his area until he restored the *chisi* rest day to Thursdays. The chief in turn summoned his headmen and village heads and told them that the *chisi* had reverted to Thursdays. He had initially altered the *chisi* rest day without seeking consent either from the *svikiro* medium or from the *mbondoro*. In spite of the fact that women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe have been noted to have occupied public religious roles within the patriarchal system or in the cult of the Creator God/*Mwali* that operated above patriarchy (Ranger 2003: 72), the chief had not requested for such permission because he was scornful towards the *svikiro*, who had just succeeded her late father as a medium, on account of her being female. But as Lan (1985) noted the *mbondoro* being the founders of clans rank higher and have more authority than the chiefs who can be sideline or dispense with when they are deemed not to comply with the *mbondoro*’s precepts.

The demand by the *mbondoro* for his rest day, or for his leisure time to use modernist conceptualisation, underlines to me the anthropocentric character of modern understandings of work which has excluded other beings and entities that perform activities or work that make it possible for human beings to survive or to have life. The work and activities of such other entities are simply taken for granted in the political economies which privilege human beings and treat other entities as objects, or as non-existent. Although mediums and their *mbondoro* are generally ignored in the literature on work, employment and labour they often expected and appreciated gifts and recognition of their work (see Mudege 2008: 145, Lan 1986: 32). The recognition of their work was not always expected to be in the form of money or other material assets but in terms of attending their ceremonies and partaking in them.

In Buhera, attendance and participation in the *mukwerera* ceremonies was often poor, both because some villagers on account of their membership in churches were disinclined and others simply did not attend or chose to do other things. Some of the villagers did not even request for recusal and for this reason the *svikiro* medium was often dejected by the poor attendance or nonattendance in the ceremonies which she contended benefited every villager when the rain eventually fell in the area. Attendance at the *mukwerera* was so variable that in 2011, when I had reached an agreement with the *svikiro* that I would attend one near her homestead, it was aborted because villagers did not come in sufficient numbers. Instead the *svikiro* went on a different day to another village a distance away to assist in their *mukwerera*. To me, she merely narrated how the *mukwerera* is done as I could not attend it that year. The following is therefore an account based on village headmen Samuel and Bere, the *svikiro* medium and her brothers Paul and Anton of how the *mukwerera* is ideally conducted. The *svikiro* and her brothers maintained that *mukwerera* is being misunderstood and unnecessarily opposed by some villagers out of lack of knowledge and that knowledge about such *mukwerera* is being lost because it is not written in books and other texts. The idealised version provided to me was therefore as follows:

After the *matakapona*, a gathering for thanks giving following harvests, people begin to prepare for the *mukwerera* which involves petitioning of the *mbondoro* for rains for the next season. Mature and married nephews of the medium's paternal side cut firewood for the brewing of the beer. *Rapoko* grain is collected

from the villages and the *mbondoro* is informed of the impending *mukwerera*. Elderly women soak the *rapoko* grain which is used for beer brewing. The people who cut the firewood have to abstain from sexual intercourse until the end of the *mukwerera* for the *mbondoro* considers sexual intercourse impure. Women who are breastfeeding are also not allowed to partake because breastfeeding is also considered to be impure because the *mbondoro* detests milk. After the beer has been brewed the *mbondoro* is informed that his beer is ready for consumption. During the *mukwerera* there is drumming, singing and clapping of hands. People have to kneel down and clap their hands when making the petitions. They also have to use Shona which is the vernacular language. Headmen Samuel and Bere and the *svikiro* medium pointed out that it often rained even as people were about to leave the *rushanga*, at the *mukwerera* tree, for the homes.

During the *mukwerera* one clay pot full of beer reserved for the people of the *mbondoro*'s clan is placed into the *rushanga* (an enclosure of spaced poles which I saw around the *muchakata* tree where the *mukwerera* is held). A nephew of the clan pours a little of the beer in four directions around the *rushanga* and then gives the remaining beer to the elders of the clan. The rest of the people then form a circle around the *rushanga* and each one is given a *mukombe* (a container made of gourd) full of beer. As each one drinks the beer, they sit down. The remaining beer is left in the *rushanga*. Clay pots and the *mukombe* are left in the *rushanga* and they are collected by elderly women the following morning. The elderly women have to ululate /*kupururudza* as they collect the items, shrilling even though there may not be anyone else visibly present since they regard the *mbondoro* beings to be present, though invisibly.

The account above showed that the *mukwerera* was conducted through forms of relatedness understood as *ukama* between human beings and entities like the *mbondoro*. It is also necessary that villagers relate well together during the *mukwerera* and from the point of view of some villagers, even before and after the *mukwerera*, relations among different entities if upset would result in droughts. For instance Martin an elderly man who I met in July 2010 when he was taking a rest at the shopping centre in the village contended that the violence, in which some villagers and citizens of Zimbabwe had died during the decade from 2000, angered God who then visited the recurrent droughts on Zimbabwe. Martin had just cycled some twenty kilometres from a school where his son teaches. He had gone there to seek his son's assistance with money for food as

he had only harvested five kilograms of maize that year. Although the *ukama* relations involve human beings, *ukama* is not restricted to biological kinship as suggested by Gelfand (1981) nor is it restricted to bodily forms or to marriage or affinal kinship. Rather *ukama* is broader than kinship in the sense that it encompasses relations with the *mbondoro* that connected them to the environment. *Ukama* is open in the sense that it encompasses different beings and entities in the world that the beings and entities are understood to dwell and to visit.

Although in *ukama* there is lack of radical distinction between human life and the lives of selected other entities, *ukama* is not necessarily animism or animistic for a number of reasons including that animism emerged as a category from within modernist ontologies which presumed radical separation between human beings and other entities and beings. Animism has been defined in many but related ways as noted by Bird-David (1999: S67): it is defined as the belief that inside ordinary visible tangible bodies there is a normally invisible, normally intangible being: the spirit. Second, animism is a religious belief involving the attribution of life or divinity to such natural phenomena as trees, thunder, or celestial bodies. Third, animism is defined as the belief that all life is produced by a “spiritual” force, or that all natural phenomena have souls. Fourth, animism is defined as the belief in the existence of a separable soul-entity, potentially distinct and apart from any concrete embodiment in a living individual or material organism. Fifth, animism is defined as the system of beliefs about souls and spirits typically found among many preliterate societies. Lastly, animism is defined as the belief, common among many preliterate societies, that trees, mountains, rivers and other natural formations possess an animating power or spirit. These definitions presume from the outset that there are clear cut distinctions between nature and belief and thus to animate presumes that the thing or object is inanimate in the first instance: It is to impose modernist naturalist ontologies (used here in Blaser’s 2009 sense where he counterposes modernist ontologies, bearing the nature-culture divide, with non-modern ontologies that he argues do not radically separate nature from culture) onto other ontologies. Secondly the definitions presume that the category of belief is universal in the sense of being found everywhere yet among the Shona Buhera villagers there is no equivalent of the English concepts of belief. As pointed out above the *svikiro* medium did not consider the *mbondoro* ancestor that spoke through her as a “spirit”, a soul or divinity

but rather as a relation that is as grandfather. And where people in Africa view such ancestors not as “spirits” but as relations they often bear pain on their account and also spend money and other material assets required in performing ceremonies to bring them home (see for instance White’s (2001) analysis of these relations in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa). In Buhera, the villagers related to the ancestors (who like in other parts of Africa are considered to be dead but alive, see Mbiti 1970, Nyathi 2001, in that their *mweya/mbepo* continue to live and to influence the human world) not through the category of belief but through *kutenda* which means to be thankful or to be grateful for the harvests and for the rains for instance, or for anything good that is done including by fellow villagers. It is such *kutenda* which oils the relations of reciprocity in *ukama*; it keeps reciprocity and flows alive to the extent that one who fails to *tenda* (to thank) is often likened to a *muroyi* (witch). The Shona have a phrase: “*kusatenda buroyi*” which means ‘failure to thank is witchcraft’ because it blocks or stops the flows that render life. Animism understood as the attribution of life by human beings, to inanimate things misses the important point too in that it presumes that it is always the visible human beings who will be speaking and making the attributions whereas when the female *svikiro* medium spoke about different worlds inhabited by different beings, it was the deep male voice of the *mbondoro* (conceived as *mbepo/mweya*) inhabiting her that I heard. And as in other parts of Zimbabwe, what such mediums say is not attributed to them but to the *mbondoro* that speak through them (Lan 1986).

From my encounter with the *svikiro* medium and the interview with the *mbondoro*, *Ukama* is shown as a mode of relating with the others to the extent of being prepared to “host” another being inside the body and letting the voice of that other being speak. It is a form of hospitality where beings not only physically meet but enter and use other entities’ bodies. In this sense the body is not invariably private since it often remains open to welcome other entities into its interior. And this embodiment of other entities often results in other *hama* relatives nestling around the persons who embody such other entities in order to consult and get advice, about rains. What is interesting to note in the case of the *svikiro* medium is that what united villagers who consulted her was not her external physical (“natural”) body but the *mbondoro* entity that spoke from within her. The *mbondoro* is not merely a subjective entity since he moves in and out of his medium’s body, inhabiting the body when he wants to say something and leaving the body when he has finished. Thus he is neither

merely a “subjective” nor an “objective” entity. Because the *mbondoro* moves in and out of his medium, this logic operates outside the Cartesian categorisation of what is inside the body as “subjective” as opposed to the “objective” that is outside the body (see Matson 1982). It is clear from the foregoing that the modes of engagement in *mukwerera* involve relationships or connections between entities which relationships assume the form of *ukama* in *chivanbu*. Even though *ukama* is the subject of focus in another chapter, it is germane herein to briefly look at how *ukama* plays out in drought interventions.

### ***Ukama*, the Worlds and Rains**

The openness of the body and the ontological hospitality it exercises to accommodate other entities correspond in some way to the openness of the world where different entities come together and relate to one another. For example, when moving from one place to the other one is often greeted with the croaking of frogs, the singing of birds, the buzzing of bees on their way to collect nectar and to their hives or to find water. And for purposes of this paper, it is important to underline the ways in which movement in the world was often related to *ukama*. Villagers stressed the relationship between movement and *ukama* by saying that *hama dzinofambirana* (relatives visit one another). And as indicated above *ukama* was not reducible to human beings but rather other entities were deemed to connect as much among themselves as they did with human beings. For the *svikiro* medium for instance the movement of bees around and into her house often preceded the arrival of human visitors. So the first visitor was the bee which announced that other visitors of the human species were coming. Entities that were met were not swiftly categorized merely in terms of their physical morphologies in the contexts where some entities could be manifestations of the *mbondoro* while others could be merely what they appeared to be. Rather there were often moments of pause, of hesitation during which villagers assessed what kind of entities they were encountering, that is, they assessed whether the entities were merely what they appeared to be or they were manifestations of other entities such as the *mbondoro*. For instance the prophets with whom I visited mountains after some moments of pausing and watching understood the movement together of a baboon and a goat to mean that the two entities were



*ngirozi* as normally they did not stay or move together. In this way *ukama* is a mode of relating that not only makes difference to be liveable but also it explains why different entities play out together in the world.

Since in the *ukama* relations entities are related such entities are deemed to have and to share the embodied knowledge about their environment. Although it is often embodied the knowledge is not invariably appropriated or monopolised by particular entities because it is dependent on *ukama* and is available in the environment. In this sense, knowledge is coproduced not only by human beings but by different entities such as the *mbondoro* and *njuzu* (that use other entities as vehicles to exert their influence in the human world) that were not regarded as mere objects of knowledge but subjects embodying knowledge. In this sense it is not merely “knowledge of”, but also “knowledge with”; it is not merely “knowledge of” the world but “knowledge with” the world. In the parts of Buhera that were inhabited predominantly by the Shona people, villagers often asked: “*neiwatikuchanaya?*” (Literally translated as ‘with what reason did you say it will rain?’). To such a question, the respondent would answer: “I heard the *haya* rain bird singing”. It is through such other entities that villagers comingled and related with that they knew the environment including the weather. For instance some villagers including village headmen Samuel and Bere pointed out that the Gombe Mountain droned and became alight with the approach of the rain season. The mountain was regarded as *hama yevahera* (relative of the *hera* people partly due to the fact that *hera* people used to stay in it and some of them were buried there. The *haya* (a rain bird which survives on water that collects in tree trunks) sings with the approach of the rain season. *Madendera* (ground hornbill; huge black birds with red wattles) migrate and sing with the approach of the rainy season. Some trees leaf as the rains approach. Also with the approach of the rainy season a cloud appears like a pool of water around the sun and moon. A small white frog, with long legs, which stays in tree trunks croaks and wind called *nhurura* starts blowing. Also clouds called *mvumi yemvura* which are thick, stable, white and rain bearing appear.

The entities are often not reducible to their morphological appearances. They may be what they seem, but then again, they may not. A mountain can be a mountain on the basis of its morphological features but it can be more than a mere mountain on the basis of invisible entities such as the *mbondoro* manifesting in it. A baboon can be a baboon on the basis of its bodily appearance but it may well be something else on the basis

of the invisible entities such as the *mbondoro* manifesting in it. Even *mbepo/mweya* (wind/air) is not reduced to the meteorological sense of it as an atmospheric phenomenon: though it can be such, it may well be something else that does not look like a mere *mbepo*. As pointed out above the *mbondoro* is also understood by the *svikiro* to manifest as *mbepo*/wind, but he was not mere *mbepo* when he manifested in his human medium or when manifesting as a lion. And the lion can be a mere lion but it can also be more than a lion when the *mbondoro* is manifesting through it. And the *svikiro* medium can be a mere human being but she can be other than a mere human when the *mbondoro* is manifesting in her. Thus an entity can be one entity yet it can also be the other entity; it can be what it is yet it can also be more. In this sense, when during the liberation war in Zimbabwe guerrillas considered animals such as baboons and birds such as *chapungu* for instance that gave them signs of warnings (Pfukwa 2001, Kriger 1995, Lan 1985) in the term of *ukama*, they can be understood to have been noting ways in which the *mweya/mbepo* of ancestors could possibly temporarily lodge in the entities and use them as vehicles to warn the guerrilla fighters.

*Ukama* relations maintain openness for possibilities for such switches. The openness of the relations bears some resonance with Ingold's (2007) argument that in "animistic" cosmologies there is attribution of supreme importance to the winds and such "animism is not a system of beliefs about the world but a way of being in it characterised by openness rather than closure". By openness here, he alludes to sensitivity and responsiveness to an environment that is in flux. For Ingold, "there is no separation between the substances and the medium since the wind, rain and other weather phenomena enter into substances and the substances are in the wind, in the weather. That is substances and the medium are mingled in an open world with no insides and outsides but comings and goings". Bearing much resonance to Ingold's argument entities in Buhera as villagers encountered them and as noted above were not invariably static: clouds and rains came and went, winds came and went, animals and birds came and went, the croaking of frogs and the singing of birds come and go, seasons themselves came and went and even the *mbondoro* ancestral being who is "hosted" by the *svikiro* medium came and went away, that is, he appeared and disappeared, disappeared and reappeared and the *njuzu* appeared and disappeared in the rivers too.

But there is also what I call unbecomings in the world in that, as for example when villagers engaged in violence and also in deforestation. The Gombe Mountain was being cleared of trees by some villagers as I witnessed during visits to the mountain. Also in a similar sense, the interparty violence that afflicted some villagers constituted the unbecomings in that such violence had not only been linked by some villagers to the droughts but also in the sense that killing is itself a mode of unbecoming rather than a becoming. Some villagers pointed out that because their *ukama* had been ruptured by interparty violence in Zimbabwe, they could not co-attend parties and other gatherings together as they no longer saw eye to eye with people who had become their assailants. Violence in this sense prevented the formation and maintenance of *ukama* relationships among human beings and as Martin, referred to above, said between them and the broader environment. The ways in which villagers connected with the environment had important partial connections with ways in which meteorological scientists connected with the weather phenomena and other places in the world. A look at the ways in which meteorological scientists operate reveals these connections.

### **Meteorological Sciences and Connections in the Worlds**

As indicated during interviews with meteorological officers at the Harare office on 8 June 2010 and 28 June 2010, the data from different centres were transmitted using telephones and radios. But the networks needed electricity which was affected by blackouts during the crises in Zimbabwe. Satellite pictures and computer generated models were used but when I interviewed the officers there was no model because the system was down and it was still to be repaired. In the meteorological services Zimbabwe needed the assistance of other countries such as Japan from which it imported balloons for the radiosondes and it needed assistance from Mexico from which it imported the radiosondes. The meteorological services were established in 1897 and regular forecasts started in 1924. The forecasts were sent by telegraph and by press to all post offices in the then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. There were also networks with other stations in South Africa, Botswana, and Northern Rhodesia which were established in 1932. In 1979 there was introduction of geostationary satellite, and weather forecasts were made via the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, Herald, Sunday Mail, Chronicle, and Sunday News

Relations and connections for meteorological scientists involved linkages between weather stations dotted in various places and with other regions and countries in the world. These connections were crucial in gathering, compiling and disseminating data. Although the meteorological scientists in Zimbabwe whom I visited during my fieldwork spent much of their time in the offices compiling and computing data, communication in the form of flows of the data among various stations underlay their relations. Outside their offices were the apparatuses such as rain gauges, wind vane, wind roses, theodolites, radars and satellites used for gathering data. At different atmospheric levels, radiosondes detected temperatures, pressures, humidity and wind direction. At the station or ground, satellite dishes tracked the movement of the radiosondes and fed data to a decoder at the base station. The meteorological scientists were in this sense separated from the weather world. They indirectly accessed the weather world via the apparatuses which they kept in the open or sent into atmospheric levels so that they brought or bore signals about the weather. The meteorological science separated the bodies (and bodily senses) of the meteorological scientists from the weather. In the meteorological science weather phenomena such as the wind and the clouds were regarded as objects in the outside world. In drought mitigation meteorological scientists in Zimbabwe cloud seeded by shooting at the clouds so that rain fell, using flares to send small particles that served as hygroscopic nuclei in the form of sodium chloride, lithium carbonate or magnesium. The meteorological officers were accompanied by military personnel during the cloud seeding. It took fifteen minutes to half an hour after the shootings for rain to fall. In this way the clouds were not mere passive “objects” of the shootings. The seeded clouds were also mobile and continued to “interact” with unseeded clouds in ways that made it hard to distinguish between naturally and artificially seeded clouds. With such mobility of the clouds the challenge for the meteorological scientists was to know with exactness where the cloud would produce rain.

It is such uncertainties of rains that also explained rain petitioning ceremonies and the *ukama* relations that accompanied them. If the villagers were always certain that rain would fall I am not sure they would engage in such ceremonies. It is uncertainties that created the need to forge and maintain *ukama* relationships partly as ways of creating fall back positions or some sort of insurance when things went wrong or did not work as expected. They created the need to work together as *bama* since life was lived on the basis of relations of

reciprocity among different beings and entities. In this sense, meteorological sciences and the villagers' *mukwerera* aimed to overcome uncertainties related to droughts so though their methods differed there were partial connections between them. Both modes of engagements are ways of knowing and relating with the world that are important in matters of surviving want and violence as will be clear in the next chapter that focuses on ways in which villagers knew about and sensed violence.



## Chapter Two

### **The *Mhepo*, *Mweya* and *Ruzivo***

#### Knowing, Sensing and Surviving Violence

*“A day before my daughter was beaten by a policeman, working at the nearby police station, I had a dream. In that dream, there was a fence and just outside it there was a dog and a snake. I somehow felt pity for these creatures. In the dream, I also “saw” some people wanting to get into the fence around my homestead. However the fence moved up and down in a way that made it difficult for the people to enter it. I knew during the dreaming that there was going to be trouble in my family. The policeman was drunk when he met my daughter who was on her way back from school. The policeman asked her which school she went to. Upon responding, the policeman accused my daughter of being boisterous and then he slapped her on the head. He was detained in the cells for a day and upon his release he came to my homestead intending to pay damages including fees for my daughter’s medication. I felt pity for him because I saw that in his family there is *mbepo* (wind) that creates problems for him so that he would misconduct himself, get detained and lose his job. I told him about the *mbepo* but I declined his damages”*(Noreen (a healer) 06 August 2011).

Within the variety of means of surviving violence that gripped Zimbabwe, dreams such as Noreen’s offered some villager’s ways of sensing violence as will be shown in this chapter. In a context where the villagers lacked access to some media such as newspapers, radios, television and the internet they often relied on ways of sensing violence such as dreams, divination, prophecy as well as personal tips. While there is often, as was the case in Zimbabwe, emphasis on the significance of conventional media which played important roles in surviving violence, this chapter argues for the need to also consider the significance of alternative modes of engagement such as among the villagers. Though such alternative modes of engagement often escape the attention of policy makers, they offer alternative ways of surviving during crises at least at the level of the everyday and in this sense it is useful to consider them in peace building and democratization initiatives.

Considering such modes of engagement calls for paying attention to everyday life modes of knowing and sensing as well as ways in which they may be understood in relation to conventional modes of knowing and sensing. In other words the relation between such everyday life modes of engagement and the formal conventional modes of knowing is one of translation and rethinking ways in which different knowledge heritages play out together, their differences notwithstanding. Thus by bringing together different knowledge heritages in this thesis particularly this chapter, I seek to grapple with ways in which they can be understood not in terms of opposition but in terms of differences and sameness (see for instance Verran 2013) across space and time that cross fertilise.

Knowing things via such modes as dreams (see also Reynolds 1996, Okazaki 2003, Auge 2012, Bernard 2007, Freud 1999, Friedson 1996, Krog et al 2009, Wiseman 2008, and Campbell 2008) raises issues about what it means to know things in the world. Although modern epistemologies have in history tended to privilege direct physical observation of things in their modes of knowing (Levin 1993) that has also facilitated colonial and postcolonial power relations hinging on the gaze (Erlman 2004), what it means to know has increasingly become a contentious issue in scholarship on various societies. Others have noted that different groups of people in the world present different ways of making sense of the world on the basis of odour, heat, audition and sight (Classen 1993) and for some the senses are not only conceived in terms of the conventional physical ones but also in terms of the spiritual senses considered to constitute inward senses. Still other scholars have sought to understanding matters of knowledge not in terms of inward spiritual senses but in terms of immortal souls or spirits considered to shuttle back and forth in its cosmic peregrinations and transformations (Conford 1964, Frede 1996, Nightingale 2010).

While such conceptualisations of the mind in terms of the peregrinating soul rather than merely in terms of the physical features of the brain has been vogue in the history of matters of knowledge (see also Snell 1948, Yolton 2000, Pargament 2007), the mind has come to be understood as functional features supported by the physicality of neurophysiological aspects. Although eminent leaders in psychology took the root meaning of the word psychology from psyche (soul), with the rise of positivism in the early twentieth century psychology distinguished itself from theology and religion which were deemed to be impediments to the scientific search



for enlightenment and rationality. But as is clear from the forms of violence that are perpetrated using modern institutions (see also Maldonado-Torres 2008, McLean 2004), modern rationality has an underside that may not have been adequately attended to in the reverence paid to the enlightenment.

But even as the modernist epistemologies defined away the soul in the quest for positivism, thereby narrowing down the cosmological resources that could be drawn from to survive, they paradoxically continued to engage with some immaterial, invisible and incorporeal phenomena. Differently understood, such immaterial, invisible phenomena seem to share space with everyday life conceptualisations of how things are connected in the cosmos. While in everyday life the wind also differently understood in terms of meteorology as well as in “spiritual” terms (see for instance Low and Hsu 2008, Kuriyama 2002, Ingold 2006, Zysk 2008) is deemed to connect things in the cosmos, the sciences conceived the invisible ether believed to pervade the universe and to be of significance in orthodox physics, chemistry, biology as well as in theology (Mackenzie 1998). The ether deemed to be composed of particles that move in particular ways so as to produce the forces found in the phenomena of electricity and magnetism predicted in the 1880s the existence and means of producing radio waves (Dear 2006: 3) that also facilitated the kind of communication at a distance that is central in this chapter. So while in the sciences, the universe is conceived as constituted with tiny waves (Thompson 2009) and electrical energy understood as a “universal fluid” that permeates and connects all forms of animate and inanimate things (Stolow 2009: 89), the ways in which they connect and differ need attention in the interest of forging postcolonial transmodern epistemologies (see for instance Turnbull 2000, Verran 2013).

Connections and differences between the modes of engagements have been understood differently with some scholars like Gelfand 1956: 43) arguing that the Shona took dreams much more seriously than Europeans did. According to him, if dreams for the Shona were frightening they were taken as warnings than he should seek the advice of a healer and the inference made was that the ancestors were warning of imminent danger. For Freud (1999) what mattered in the relay of information was not “deities” such as ancestors but the neural or mental energy which circulated in a system in contact with the external world through the self or ego imagined as an organisation of neurones constantly charged with energy and able to

receive or inhibit stimuli from outside. Although other more contemporary scholars like Ingold (2007) have argued that the wind makes us hear by transmitting sound waves, they have not adequately attended to the connections between different modes of engagements such as between those deemed as secular and the sacred. The ways in which the secular and the sacred connect and separate are explicated by scholars such as Deleuze who argued for instance that as in the case of the mystic, cinema can become a “spiritual” tool capable of facilitating an experience of ecstatic subjectivation in which spectators experience cinema as an optical, sound situation, a voice or a vision and a scattering of time crystals that lead them beyond the boundaries of their static selves and into profound contact with the outside (Goddard 2001).

Although this Deleuzian rendering of the cinema and mysticism offers ways in which to rethink the divide between the sacred/ the secular, the inside/the outside, truth/falsity, virtuality/actuality; the realm of the virtual is presented differently in scholarship with some arguing that it is the universe itself that is a virtual reality (see for instance Whitworth 2007). The significance of such virtualities herein is that they too facilitate communication at a distance and so foregrounding them helps in understanding ways in which the virtualities or the logics of different virtualities, in time and space, play out in everyday life struggles for surviving violence via communication at a distance. Deleuze for instance understands events as virtual, neither inside nor outside the world, but actualised in a state of affairs in the body and in the lived without assuming identity with them but enjoying a secret and shadowy path that is either subtracted or added to any actualisation. Though others have argued that God (such as upon whom some villagers as I will explore below, relied on in communicating at a distance, can be said to be a metaphor for the universe and to be virtual reality (as contrasted to physical sensible reality) whose presence is enhanced by suppression of disbelief in the same way that immersion in a computer graphic virtual environment is enhanced (Sheridan 1998), this does not auger well with cosmologies where God is deemed to have created the world *ex nihilo*. While this conceptualisation by Deleuze makes connections between the virtual and the actual, it necessitates the recognition of types of multiplicities such as the actual states and the virtual events which presuppose questions about immanence and transcendence in the ways in which things are conceived in everyday life such as I studied in Buhera. If as is suggested in Deleuze also in Badiou (see Norris 2010) and in Bergson

(2002), events including recollection have the character of arriving passing from the virtual to the actual then at least some forms of reality and truth instead of taking the form of correspondences and coherences of things also assume the character of arriving and congealing into actuality.

Though the arrival of virtual events is conventionally understood in terms of communication and information technology (see for instance Harper 2002, Horst and Miller 2006), bodies as mediums (Stolow 2009) whether of events as recollections, dreams, divinations and prophecies can be understood as sites where such arriving events condense actualise and disperse. While this rendition of the body parallels the Deleuzean body without organs (BWO) which he understood as open and traversed by powerful nonorganic vitality that destroys personal or self identity beyond recognition (Poxon 2001), mediums have been noted as retaining their personal identities even though they also assume the identities of the ancestors possessing them (Fontein 2004, Lambek 2009: 16). Even though mediums maintain openness of their bodies to the ancestors possessing them, they are also understood to foreclose visitations by the wind/air (conventionally understood as spirits) of the *ngozi* aggrieved dead thought to bring suffering on the living (see for instance Gelfand 1966, Zambesia 2002, and Bourdillon 1976). Similarly Pentecostals (see for instance Maxwell 2006, Marshal 2009) are reported to adopt techniques to foreclose visitations by ancestral figures as well as by *ngozi* and effects of witchcraft. Yet other scholars have noted that from 1966 churches like the Roman Catholic has had a burial ceremony that emphasises communication with the spirits of the family's ancestors and in the ceremony there is explicit acknowledgement of the role of ancestors as mediators between the deceased and the Christian God (Daneel 1987: 260).

Such perceptions, as noted above, of *mbepo/mweya* (wind/air) as differentiated in terms of ancestors (*midzimu*), in terms of the aggrieved dead (*ngozi*) (Gelfand 1956, Engelke 2007, Werbner 1995, Zambesia 2002, Muphree 1969, Werbner 1991 and in terms of heavenly *ngirozi* underscore some differences and sameness in everyday life modes of engagements. In the context of Buhera some villagers, like Samuel, commented thus: “*Vanhu vanodzora mudzimu asi mudzimu hauoneki, mudzimu mweya. Saka kana munhu afa anoenda kumadzitataguru, anoenda kumbepo*” (Villagers conduct ceremonies for ancestors so that they return to the living but the ancestors are invisible, the ancestors are air. So the dead go to their ancestors, they go to the wind). In other

contexts comments noted included *musha wapinda mbepo* (a wind has got into a village in reference to a quick spreading disease or problem) (see Zambezia 2002) and in reference to a *ngozi* called *mbepo* that is deemed to arrive in a village in the form of a whirlwind (see for instance Gelfand 1956). In yet other contexts the *mbepo* or *mweya* (see for instance Gelfand (1956: 13) has been understood, somewhat in a meteorological sense, as the air upon which “man”, animals, insects and plants depend. But Gelfand proceeds to state that among the Shona the term *mbepo/mweya* is closely bound up with *Mwari* because all living things depend on air. Such conceptualisations as well as his remark that *mbepo* or *mweya* is part of the “tribal” spirits and every living being, as there is a continuous to-and-fro passage of air through the body”, generalise the terms *mbepo/mweya* losing the nuances including the ways in which the *mbepo/mweya* is differentiated in everyday life.

Despite noting the ways in which *mbepo/mweya* is deemed to connect things, Gelfand did not explore the implications of such connections on matters of time and space. If as Low and Hsu (2008) argue wind connects wilderness to the hearth, moving beyond the body to within the body, from the dead to the living, from the quotidian to the divine, connecting people to people and people with the environment, then understanding things via the wind/air has implication for time and space. If the wind is understood to collapse space between things it can also offer tools to rethink ways in which multiple temporalities between the spaces and things get collapsed in ways that permit not only synchronisation or diachronisation but also moments when simultaneities of temporalities (see for instance Mbembe 2001, Bergson 2002) share the same space. Understanding *chivanhu* in term of the traditional or the past as some scholars do ignore the ways in which the cosmologies often bring different spaces, time and things into compositional unity (Devisch 2001: 105, Farriss 1987, Kapferer 2006) and difference that defy the tyranny of evolutionary linearity of time. If in Africa “spiritual” realities are not limited by ordinary categories of time and space (Richards 1990) then there is need to think beyond the rigid binaries of the “modern”/ the “traditional” in ways that parallel the virtual modes of reality as explicated by scholars such as Whitworth (2007), Bergson (2002).

Whitworth’s argument that the universe is a virtual reality with the world being an information simulation running on a multi-dimensional space-time screen shows ways in which results of quantum physics propose that each quantum choice divides the universe into parallel universes so that everything that can happen does

happen somewhere in an inconceivable multi-verse of parallel universes. The results of modern physics experiments showing that time dilates, space curves, entities teleport and objects exist in many places at once also help to underscore, in this sense, the ways in which complexity exposes the tyranny of narrowing down life, including everyday life such as what I studied, to time as mechanical linearity. Conceptualising things in the world as partially connected, if via the medium of the *mbepo/mweya*, makes it possible to conceive time as shared allowing for simultaneities, for singularities as well as pluralities in the experiencing of time. But while Bergson understands such temporal complexities in terms of the unfolding of the universe, in everyday life in the villages I studied significance was often placed on the *mbepo/mweya* which, through rituals (see also Shoko 2012, Farriss 1987), could be manipulated by human beings. In this sense the cosmologies implicated are human centric (see also Kapferer 2006, Devisch 2001: 105, Burbridge 1925) at least in the ways in which human beings mobilise other things via rituals.

*Ruzivo* which is the vernacular term that encompasses knowledge and wisdom does not only refer to knowledge and wisdom via the *mbepo/mweya* but there are also other ways of gaining knowledge (see for instance Mangena and Mukova 2013). There is also orature through which knowledge is shared (see for instance Hadebe 2001) and there is knowledge which is gained simply by being attentive to changes in the environment for instance in predicting the weather patterns (see for instance Mararike 1999, Mutasa 2010). There is also knowledge gained through schools and the mass media occasioning hybrid realities that dictate the need to straddle the worlds of *chivanhu* and modern media as villagers often creatively drew on both to negotiate the communicative hurdles (see also Nyamnjoh 2005). Though the different ways of sensing and knowing violence were important in their various respects, the thrust of this chapter is more on those that allowed for engagements at a distance without actually being involved or engaged in the scenes of violence.

The violence about which I write and which the villagers had to survive spanned more than a decade beginning in the late 1990s. By noting such a period I do not mean that there was not violence prior to this period but simply that villagers as will be indicated below noted that it was with the formation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party in the late 1990s that the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) became as violent in the villages. But also at the

beginning of the year 2000, the ZANU PF government sponsored Constitutional Draft meant inter alia to compulsorily acquire land from white farmers lost the votes in the referendum. To account for this loss the government blamed white farmers who it alleged had ordered their farm workers to vote against it, it also blamed the opposition party as well as some civil society organizations alleged to have campaigned for the “No vote” (see for instance Raftopoulos 2009). In the light of these developments the country descended into an abyss of violence and repression. To get a sense of the contours of the violence it is imperative to focus on it, however briefly.

### **Brief Notes on Violence and Matters of Knowledge in Zimbabwe**

The magnitude of the violence that ensued was such that between July 2001 and August 2008 the Human Rights Forum reported 4, 765 allegations of torture and 39 000 violations of human rights (see Reeler et al 2009). The violations included abductions, assaults, rape, murder and damage to as well as confiscation of property. In the majority of the cases of violation reported, the law enforcement agents did not act because of their alleged biases towards the ruling party. The law enforcement agencies were reported to be corrupt and biased towards the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party (Reeler 2009). In suppressing dissent the government used colonial legislation such as the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) which was enacted by the colonial government which was keen to stem the liberation war uprisings in 1960. Weitzer (1984) has noted such continuities between the colonial and postcolonial apparatuses of repression including the LOMA and the Emergence Powers Act of the 1960. In colonial Zimbabwe in the 1960s there was also frequent use of notions of “national interest” and “state security” to suppress dissent: the Parliament delegated a wealth of its powers to the executive and there was formal and informal censorship on the media coupled with virulent attacks on organizations with potential to wreak havoc upon the official government line. The media in postcolonial Zimbabwe was heavily controlled using legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). Effectively the private media was placed under severe restrictions using such legislation. Parallels, including the bombing of some media houses, also existed between the colonial and postcolonial periods

(Thondhlana 2011). The media houses were themselves polarised with the state media blaming private media for purveying western ideologies and lies that dented the image of Zimbabwe. On the other hand the private media alleged that the state media was biased toward the ruling party also purveying its ideologies. In the context it was not easy to pick truth from falsehoods in the polarised media that often reported similar issues differently.

The situation was made worse for the villagers by the fact that some of their radios were confiscated by the police and by members of the ruling ZANU PF party. For instance Pal noted during an interview on 6 June 2011 that he and his colleagues who were MDC members listened to radios which were solar rechargeable but when violence reached its climax in 2008 the radios were confiscated. He noted that the police patrolled the villages with the intention of finding who among the villagers had such radios over which news about violence in the country was beamed every evening. So they would just arrive and order the villagers to cede the radios to them. Many were confiscated and those who possessed the radios were beaten up. Pal and his colleagues used to listen to Voice of America (VOA) Studio Seven on the radios every evening. But he noted that it was risky to listen to Studio Seven because if one was found listening to it they were beaten up. According to Pal, the police patrolled the villages even during the night: some drove around in their vehicles, others patrolled on feet, some cycled around the villages.

The confiscation of the radios and the controls placed on listening to radio stations such as the Voice of America (VOA) can be understood in the context of the government's efforts to "localize" media content. The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) had as one of its provisions the "localization" of such media content. It may also be understood in the context of the government's efforts to control the influence of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) some of which had donated the radios that were being used by the villagers such as Pal.

In the context of the violence and the government's repression of the media, some villagers as I will show below relied on prophets and healers as well as on their own dreams to sense violence. Five different apostolic sects were located in the villages though there were also churches such as Roman Catholic and the Methodist church that do not rely on prophecies. Four healers were also located among the villagers offering

their services to those who relied on them. Although some apostolic sects have been noted as averse to using the Bible in their services (Engelke 2007), many sects in Buhera relied on the Bible as well as on prophecies in their services. Even the healers such as Noreen and the medium both of whom attend the Roman Catholic Church also relied on the Bible though back home they relied on divination. In spite of the antipathy that members of Apostolic churches had towards healers and mediums, the healers and mediums on their part asserted that they owe their allegiance to *Mwari* whose voice they consulted at the Matopo Hills in the past (see also Ranger 1999, Daneel 1970, Gelfand 1959, Bullock 1950) and whose name has been translated by some mission societies as God (Bullock 1927, 1950, Jeater 2007).

Although understandings of *Mwari* have been contested with some scholars referring to the voice at the Matopo Hills to be that of witchdoctors (Bullock 1950), other scholars and even Bullock himself noted that pointed out that *Mwari* was not understood as having some anthropomorphic attributes (Bullock 1950: 150). He for instance noted that *Mwari* was neither a fetish god bound by some stick or stone nor a totem/fetish or an apotheosis of an ancient (Bullock 1927). Still other scholars as hinted in the previous chapter went so far as to liken the mediums of principal *mbondoro* with the Archbishops and Bishops in Christian society (Gelfand 1956:17). Others noted ways in which the *Mwari* cult offered buffers at the national level against misrule by individual chiefs and kings whose powers were neutralised by the fear of “supernatural” punishment that the cult could invoke (Abraham 1966: 38-39). Thus despite the elaborate indirect approach to *Mwari* through mediums and direct approach by the priests at the cave shrines (Muphree 1969), *Mwari/Nyadenga* was also considered to be in the *denga* (heaven) in the same way Christians did (Bullock 1927).

Even though there is evidence of ways in which things were connected in the scholarship, more could have been explored about the different metaphysical commitments, including their implications for understanding space, time and life. Attention to such metaphysical issues would have shown that far from being merely matters of tradition and locality the cosmologies, at least in so far as they were premised on *mbepo/mweya* and the manifold connections it facilitated, spoke more of diversity and unity of things space and time notwithstanding. The mobile phones upon which villagers partly relied have also been argued to constitute a striking conjunction of remote co-present communication (Cooper et al 2002: 281). Even the logics of



dreams such as that villager relied upon have been understood by some scholars in terms of the logics of communication at the end of the modern period. Campbell (2008: 21) has for instance argued that dreams of instantaneous knowledge, of motion and travel by means of encryption or dissociation have been realised again at the end of the 'modern' through the invention of the telegraph, phonograph, television and radio as extensions of the old 'dream hole' in the bell tower, through the digital optics of the computer which obeys the gravure of the miniature text written in copper characters and read by the motion of light. Attention to metaphysics in prophecies, dreams and divination speaks to logics of modes of "virtuality" by which connections were understood to be forged in everyday life despite distance and time.

### **Prophecy, Dreaming and Divination**

Ways in which connections with things at a distance were deemed possible featured in matters of dreaming, divination and prophecy throughout the fieldwork. The matters relating to dreaming and prophecy came to the fore in April 2011. I had missed the annual church gathering for Pascal which was held in April 2011 because I was in Cape Town at the time so I was keen to attend the Pentecost gathering scheduled for June 2011. The Pentecost gathering was planned to span a period of five day from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> so we really had to prepare adequate food to cover the period. A bus was hired and it ferried us to the district of Murewa (about 80 km from the Capital city of Harare). We arrived at about 9pm of the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2011. As soon as we arrived, we unloaded our belongings and put them in tents which were to serve as our restrooms for the duration of the gathering. From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of June we spent each day singing, preaching and praying. We only had breaks in order to feed, to bath and to fetch firewood. It was winter time in Zimbabwe so we had to keep the fire alight to keep us warm.

At about 2am of the last day of the gathering we felt rather tired and sleepy. However I had to struggle to stay awake in order to observe all the proceedings. The leader and founder of the church had earlier on noted that it would be on the last day of the gathering that some of the church members were going to receive their gifts of the *mweya* for which they had gathered. I was requested by one of the leaders to preach so I summoned the remaining strength I had and the courage to stand before the crowd. I welcomed the

invitation which gave me the chance to preach but then as I preached I could see with frustration many of the church members dozing. So I decided to make the sermon as brief as possible. After the preaching I receded to the fireplace and dozed off while other preachers took the stage. It was at about 4am that I was shaken to full wakefulness by the shrilling of some church members. They spoke in unintelligible language, moved about all at the same time in different directions around the place of the gathering. It was my first time to attend such a gathering and so I was very much astonished. I shifted my position in order to sit close to one of the church members who appeared to know something about what was happening. He offered some interpretation of what the church members were saying. Then he hinted that they were speaking the language of the Holy Spirit (*mweya*/air) and that they had received the *mweya* in their bodies for the first time. But in all this they seemed to be overpowered by it and to have lost control of themselves. The church founder just looked on as if nothing strange was happening. After the commotion was over he rose to the stage and handed over some earthen ware plates to mark the church members, who had by then returned to calm, as prophets.

In a context where villagers and other citizens were engaged in surviving the extraordinary challenges of violence, the events at the church gathering could be conventionally understood in term of psychiatric disturbances to their minds (see also Patel et al 1995, Jackson 2005), particularly if the series of sleepless nights that we spent praying are taken into cognisance. But then, if the events are interpreted this way the multiple modes of virtualities such as those anticipated by the church members throughout their gathering would appear marginal. In such cases where prophecies and dreams are understood to be coming from outside the mind there is need to focus not merely on the mind but rather on the interlinkages between the body and the outside in order to see the envisaged connections at least from the point of view of the congregants. If the events are considered in the context such as Zimbabwe where some citizens who, because of the government's drive towards localisation of the media content, erected satellite dishes in order to evade the localised media; the technologies of prophecy and dreaming can be understood as efforts to establish contact with the outside beyond static bodies and minds. The fasting and confessions that preceded the gathering can be interpreted in terms of the broader sacrifices particularly citizens in urban areas made during

the crisis period to connect with others near/far, visible/invisible. The sacrifices made to purchase satellite dishes (see for instance Atwood 2010) in the context of acute cash shortages and hyperinflation as well as against the possibilities of reprisals from the government that often ordered the pulling down of satellite dishes speak to the broader efforts in the country to overcome loneliness and isolation from the world.

But the world which prophets sought to connect was not just the human world about which they prophesied but also what they understood as the heavenly world. As well the worlds which healers sought to connect was not just the human world but often the underworld of *njuzu* to which some healers such as Noreen above claimed they had been to acquire healing *ruziwo* (see also Gelfand 1956, Burbridge 1924, Bernard 2003, 2007, McGregor 2003, Mawere and Wilson 1995). Conjured by such understandings of worlds is the image that is contrary to the conventional portrayals of villages as remote and isolated from the world. Though it was mainly prophets, healers and mediums rather than the rest of the villagers who were held to commune with the worlds, their modes of engagements with them suggest the presence of different kinds of ontologies to the colonial modernist one. Whereas the colonial modernist epistemologies and ontologies privileged kinds of knowledge in the human world that could be accessed via the conventional methods, among such villagers *ruziwo* was gathered from multiple connected worlds. And whereas such conventional epistemologies privileged the individual self as a knower, knowing at least via such *mbepo/mweya* among villagers was sometimes considered to be impersonal particularly in the churches where it was deemed to be from God.

Looked at from the point of view of the formal modernist epistemologies that privilege ocularcentrism and the metaphysics of presence, the worlds would appear little more than subjective assertions. However if considered in the context of everyday life affected not only by distant places but also by invisible state institutions it is easy to understand the everyday life logics of connections between the visible/ invisible, near/far. The distant invisible state institutions understood to have been visiting violent events in the villages did not render themselves to the senses of sight in everyday life but they were considered to have presence in the villages. In this sense the visible/invisible, near/far occupied the same spaces necessitating ways of sensing and knowing that could not privilege direct sight in the physical sense.

I had an interview with a prophetess who I will call Tra on 9 March 2011. Her homestead is located about ten kilometres away from the Harare-Murambinda highway. Tra bemoaned the troubles she had from the year 1999 when her husband joined the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party. Her husband, she noted, was being “hunted” by members of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) who wanted to persecute him on account of his membership in an opposition party. She noted that during the period of violence her *mweya/mbepo* (wind/air) showed (*kuonesha*) her problems even before they happened. Through her dreams, her wind/air “revealed” wars in which her husband was involved. Each time such wars were revealed in her dreams she knew that trouble was impending and so she duly warned her husband. Her husband would then take flight and seek refuge in the Capital city of Harare. When peace resumed in the village (indicated to her via dreams that did not portray wars), Tra used her mobile phone to inform her husband. With joy Tra stated thus: “My wind/air always informed me when there was trouble. I had dreams about wars. The wind/air helped a lot. During the period of political violence, church members like us saw visions about the state of things in the country”.

Tra’s claim that she was given visions and dreams is interesting to note in the context of the violence. Interpreted in such a context, her obvious inclination to decentre herself from the modes of sensing and knowing underscores apprehensions that villagers had in claiming to and operating alternative sources of information in a situation where the government was aversive to alternative sources of media. In the context where the government confiscated alternative sources of information such as radios, decentring herself and asserting that the visions and dreams originated from the *mweya/mbepo* may be understood as a device to forestall possible victimisation. In fact within the churches of which services I participated in there were members addressed as *varoti* (dreamers) and *varatidzwi* (those who are rendered visions) who with the assistance of prophets shared their dreams and visions with the rest of the members. However if this decentring of the self is understood in the context of similar findings in different African contexts (see for instance Friedson 1996, Reynolds 1996) it may not be explicable simply in terms of the fears of reprisals in the context of the ongoing violence within the villages. Besides, if it was simply for fear of reprisals that Tra decentred herself by claiming that the dreams and visions were coming from another source, I would have

expected her not to recentre herself during the interview that I subsequently had with her. For these reasons, the decentring of the self can be understood in terms of connections, not only in village everyday life but also in the context of post enlightenment modernity, where technologies, be they bodily or otherwise are often deployed to connect things that may not necessarily be within sight.

In such a context of violence, the preoccupation among villagers was not to be directly present in the scenes of violence but to endeavour to have *ruzwi* about oncoming events and find ways to evade the violence. Villagers in such a context could ill afford to wait for violent moments to actualise. For instance Tra noted that in the period immediately preceding the 2008 rerun of Presidential elections her husband refused to take flight and to seek refuge. She had warned him that members of the ZANU PF party were on their way to the homestead to look for and to assault him. Her husband reasoned that he had overstayed away from home so he had resolved not to run away this time. Four days after her husband turned down the warning to flee, the assailants arrived at his homestead. They were armed with guns but because it was dark Tra did not manage to identify them. It was at about twelve midnight when they arrived. They knocked on the door with force. Before Tra and her husband responded, the door was knocked with more force and it swung open. Tra narrated thus: “I then felt like I was filled with “*mbepo/mweya*” and I started *kurira nendimi* (literary translated to sound with the tongue in reference to what is understood as the language of the air/wind) as I moved out of the house. I walked around the house and then headed for the forest. When I was in the middle of the forest which is at the foot of the mountain, I heard gunshots. The shots went thrice. I knelt down and prayed: I was filled with fear because I thought someone had been gunned down. After the prayer, I walked back home and on arrival I was informed by one young boy that the assailants had taken my husband with them. He informed me that they had taken him to Rusape Police Station on trumped-up allegations that he was causing violence in Buhera district”.

Dreams and prophecies were thus considered to offer ways of surviving violence but prophets such as Tra were sometimes harassed by ruling party youths on allegations that they were forewarning their intended victims. Tra for instance noted that at one time she was summoned to a night political gathering called *pungwe* where she was harassed and ordered to provide a cow, which was slaughtered and consumed by the militia,

on allegations that she was forewarning the intended victims. Keen to assert its grip on everyday lifeworlds, the state would not allow modes of engagement that challenged its hegemony.

But dreams also pertained to matters outside the realm of politics. I had dreams during the fieldwork some of which referred to other people including church members. Sometimes I did not relay them to the rest of the church members partly because I considered them my own trivial experiences and partly because I was often too busy and forgot even to write them down so that I would not forget. For instance in one of my dreams I visited one of the church leaders but unfortunately when I arrived some men I did not know were busy unroofing his house and they had also ploughed his garden. In the dream I was unhappy about what the men had done and I asked them why they had done so. They did not respond so I walked to a place nearby where I saw the church leader I had visited. He was lying down on a flat rock looking sickly. At a nearby homestead many people were gathered and my sense in the dream was that it was a funeral gathering. I watched them carry a coffin and proceed to a graveyard which I sensed in the dream was close to the church leader's home. I followed them to the graveyard for a while but all this time I was complaining and saying, "but these people should not have done what they were doing to the church leader". I woke up before reaching the graveyard but my sense was that it was close. About a month after the dream the church leader was taken critically ill. I paid him a visit and found him lying down barely able to rise and walk. He had missed two weeks of church service. I asked him why he had not sent a message to the church and he pointed out that he had sent his step-son to relay the message. Although I saw his step-son at the recent church service he had not said anything before the gathering or to me about his step-father's illness. For some reason his step-son kept quiet about the illness.

Feeling bad that I had not reported my earlier dream as required in the church, about the church leader, to the rest of the church members and to the leader who was now ill I phoned two other prophets who arrived immediately to conduct prayers. I was censured, for not reporting the dream, and reminded that the dreams were not mine to keep. With my participation in the churches my dreams had become clear and I was often surprised by how they often accurately portrayed the wakeful world.

Dreams provided the villagers with tools to make sense of their environment but they also underscored ways in which things were connected beyond the sense of sight. By treating wakeful events and dream events similarly, villagers can be understood to have been shunning the radical distinction that is often assumed to exist between them. But they can also be understood to have been shunning radical distinctions between day and night events that are emphasised in ocularcentric epistemologies. Even though some dreams were considered to have hidden and elusive meanings, day time as well as wakeful events were also often elusive in the context of the violence. This made elusiveness an insufficient ground upon which to dismiss dreams. Perpetrators of violence for instance often visited their victims wearing masks and in the cover of the darkness of the nights also rendering their identities elusive.

In the light of their elusiveness, dreams can be understood in terms of the broader events that arrived and often actualised in everyday village life. The news for instance about the interparty negotiations and the possible abatement of suffering with the political settlement arrived in the villages as exciting and promising events even though the political settlement did not subsequently actualise as an abatement of suffering among villagers. Equally news about the National Healing Programme that was instituted by the unity government just after its inception arrived in the villages as good news but because only a few participated the events did not actualise in everyday village life. In this sense, events in everyday wakeful life were not be always radically distinguished from dream time events some of which actualised while others failed to materialise. Understanding matters of sensing and knowing in terms of the wind characterised the village life but it may also be a metaphorical reference to events that are yet to actualise in the context of the ambiguities and prevarications in life.

Such references to the ambiguities and prevarication in life in terms of the wind are made for instance with respect to individuals who are unpredictable. Statements such as “*ane mambepo*” (he/she has winds) are often made in reference to individuals who prevaricate including in ways that are deemed harmful to others. But such statements are also made in reference to individuals who are deemed to be afflicted by bad winds/*mbebo dzakaipa* which are considered to explain their prevarications. For this reason the *mbebo* that enter and connect with the body are controlled via rituals such as exorcism and appeasement in the churches and by healers (see

also Reynolds 1996, Schmidt 1995, and Dube 2011). Because winds are often associated with such prevarications, I noticed that within the churches the terms *mweya* (air) is preferred when referring to stable and nonviolent flows.

The salience of connections between things in such cosmologies has led to their different interpretations. While some like Kapferer (2006) have argued that the cosmologies involve processes whereby events, objects and practice are brought into compositional unity in which they are conceived as existing together and in mutual relations is well supported, his other arguments are contested. His view that witchcraft and sorcery constitute the metacosmologies (ways of patterning or bringing together acts, events or practices that may normally be expected to exist in different or separate cosmological frames) (see also Devisch 2001: 105) is amenable to definitional contestations of witchcraft and sorcery. Though others have used the term witch in the context of Zimbabwe, some have argued that the Shona had no vernacular words for witchcraft, sorcery, magic, magicians as used in Europe (see for instance Gelfand 1967). While some like Burbridge (1925) have argued that witchdoctors tape psychic energy in certain natural objects which they annex to their drugs and persons, others like Gelfand (1967) have argued that the term witchdoctor is wrong if it is used to denote something evil. For him, the *n'anga* (erroneously understood as witchdoctor) originally meant one who was able to manipulate the occult forces for the good of human beings. Still for other scholars, on Zimbabwe, like Chavunduka (1980: 132) *muroyi/umthakathi* (conventionally translated as witch/sorcerer) included people who poisoned others, those who failed to carry out necessary rituals for their dead relatives, people who committed antisocial acts or trouble makers, arsonists, deviants, eccentrics and incest committers (see also Hallen 2006: 202).

Thus while for Chavunduka witchcraft (*uroyi/uthakathi*) includes failure to perform rituals including for dead relatives, for scholars like Kapferer witchcraft and sorcery constitute the metacosmologies including the patterning or bringing together of acts, events or practices that may normally be expected to exist in different or separate cosmological frames. In a context such as among the villagers in Buhera where healers and mediums for instance considered their ancestors as immortal, alive albeit in different forms and interacting with the living (see also Colson 1971, McGregor 2003), Chavunduka may well be right to include failure to



perform rituals as an aspect of witchcraft by the living. But apart from analysing witchcraft in terms of either failure to perform rituals or in terms of performing rituals that brings things from different cosmological frames together, it is necessary to look more closely at its metaphysical implications in relation to violence and survival.

The significance of performing rituals including for purposes of gaining *ruziro* from ancestors was underscored by Godobori, whom I interviewed on 6 August 2011. In his words, “In the Gombe the booster has collapsed again which means that they did not perform the rituals well because they only wanted money from the Econet. Money is what has caused a lot of problems, *hama* no longer have harmonious relations due to money. There is intense competition within families and also *hama* do not want their family members to become rich, they paradoxically tolerate it when outsiders become rich or are rich in their faces. Churches also cause divisions within families since because of the influence of churches; members can no longer perform *chivanhu* rituals together. In my case, I say that Jesus of Nazareth is for the Europeans, I have doubts about him though I have no doubts about *Mwari*, the Creator of human beings (*musikavanhu*) because we (meaning inhabitants of Zimbabwe) have always known Him. *Musikavanhu takagara tichimuziva* (we have always known the Creator of human beings). *Vatema havasivo vakarovera Jesus saka vane mbosva yeyi uye vanopinda papi munyaya iyi, havasi kwebekereswa vasina kutadza here apa? Ini ndinomboti vakaparidza vachishora chivanhu ndinodzoka kumba kwangu ndoti handichadi kudzokera kuChurch iyo iri pedyo nedoor rakatarisa kuno. Vamwe maBishop vanouya pano vachida kusimbisirwa zvinhu zvaro ndoti vatange vagadzira chivanhu, vonogadzira nekubika doro vozokumbira kusunungurwa kuChurch kwavo* (The black people are not the ones who killed Jesus so what crime did they commit and why are they included in the story of the killing Jesus, are they not being sacrificed for the crime that they did not commit in this case? Sometimes I feel like returning home in the middle of church services when preachers begin to vilify *chivanhu*. I feel like I do not have to continue attending the church services in that church of which door is facing this direction. Some Bishops consult me wanting to be fortified, I tell them to go and perform *chivanhu* including brewing beer and after performing *chivanhu*, they go back to their churches and confess so that *vanosunungurwa* (they are released from association with *chivanhu*).

*Vamwe vanopirwa hope nemidzimu. Kushopera kwakafanana nehope. Hope dzinokunda kushopera chete dzimwe hope dzinoyira dzakabwanda. Vamwe vanhu vanotsipika hope vaona kuti munhu uyu anoona. Kana watsipikirwa hope unotoenda wogezwa nekunwa mvura yemuti wesunungura vadzimu. Mabira emudzimu kuti utaure panouya n'anga nemasvikiro votamba vobohwera vachiti 'ine haugoni' voita kuti mudzimu uite shungu wobuda wotaura. Iye zvino masabhuku ave kungoita mikwerera pasina masvikiro pamwe kusvira kana kusada kutongwa. Zviyo zvinounganidzwa zvopirwa mukadzi wasabhuku zvimwe anenge achiyamvira, sadza rave kubikirwa kumba kwake roendeswa pamuchakata, zviyo zvave kunyikwa mumadish. Tinofara kuti tine vanotitsigira vemumaUniversity nokuti kwatiri kuenda kwakaoma nekusaziva. Pamabira vana babamunini vangu vaitotiza nokuti vaive nezvavaive nazvo. Vakazofa vachitambura. Mudzimu kurwadza unenge wakatsipikwa, pakasoswa wopinda zvekumanikidzira. Umwe unenge uine zvinotevera kana wosvika vanhu vava vakawhara vanozoti atenga mudzimu, atorera umwe. Mudzimu hausiyi munhu nyangwe akaenda kuchurch. Vemachurch vanoti chivanhu hakuna asi kana munhu afa ndipo patinosangana nokuti rukao runotemwa newedzinja kwete mufundisi. Panenge munhu ofa vanoti ave kurotomoka apo anenge ave kuona vedzinja rake, vedzinja rake ndivo vanomutambira* (Some villagers are given dreams by their ancestors. Divining is like dreaming. Dreams are better than divining, only that some dreams are vague. Some envious people can block (*kutsipika*) other people's dreams when they realise that, for instance their intended victim is seeing too much during the dreaming. When your dreams have been blocked you have to drink and bath using water and an herb called *sunungura vadzimu* (release the ancestors). At the *biras* that are conducted so that *midzimu* can talk, *n'anga* and mediums have to attend, they sing, dance and joke with the *mudzimu* claiming that the particular *mudzimu* can not talk. This is meant to motivate the *mudzimu* to begin talking. Nowadays villageheads cannot conduct ceremonies well. This is probably because they do not want mediums to assume power over them. I am happy that there are people like you who are in university and come to support us; the direction we are heading to because of ignorance is not good at all. My uncle never attended *biras* in our family because he had *zvikuwambo* that he wanted to hide and about which he was apprehensive that if he attended the *bira* they would be revealed by *vadzimu*. But the *zvikuwambo* eventually killed him in a very miserable way. When the *mudzimu* manifest in its host with a lot of troubles on the host, it is because some living human beings will have blocked, or denied voice, (*kutsipikwa*) the opening for the *mudzimu* to visit the host with comfort. Other

*mudzimu* may manifest with a lot of troubles on the host because there will be witches who will be blocking its entrance to the family or to its descendants. The *mudzimu* does not abandon its medium even if one becomes a church member.)

Church members do not agree that *chivanhu* exists but then when one of their members dies that is when we meet with the church members because the preburial ritual of *rukau* (to mark the grave site using a hoe) is always done by a member of one's family and not by the pastor or some other church member. When a person is dying they say that he/she has insanity when he/she begins to talk about things that they do not understand. In fact the dying individual will be seeing and communicating with his/her forefathers. It is one's forefathers who receive the dying individual into *Nyikadzimu*".

This interview that I had with Godobori underscored the significance of retaining *ruziro* about rituals in *chivanhu* but then some rituals associated with witchcraft were understood to bring a lot of suffering for villagers. Bearing in mind, as noted above, the fact that witchcraft is not only about the use of concoctions against others but also about the perpetration of various forms of mischief including violence against others, a look at issues of witchcraft would reveal the challenges faced by villagers with respect to the witches.

### **Witchcraft-Related Violence**

Matters relating to witchcraft were raised during my fieldwork when I was at the homestead of one old man in the village. I had visited the old man, who had the same totem as I, as part of my efforts to create connections during my preliminary fieldwork in 2010 as indicated in the introduction. My chat with the old man was cut short when he informed me that there was going to be a church service in his house that morning. After greeting the church members as they arrived, we all moved into the hut where the church service was conducted. It was one of those moments for me when during fieldwork an event offers itself up to be taken, so I decided immediately to join the church members in the prayer but I did not know what was in store for me in the service. Towards the end of the service the prophet in that church pointed at me and prophesied that I would experience acute pain in my feet at some point. According to the prophet, some *varoyi* (conventionally understood as witches) who were envious of me had gathered soil from my footprints,

mixed it with herbs, needles and other substances. In ways that suggested that the *varoyi* had the capability to activate the environment to harm me, the prophets intimated that they had placed the concoctions under cover on one path of which they knew I would walk.

I did not seek the prophet's assistance after the service because I somewhat considered his utterances trivial since I did not experience anything amiss on me, with respect to health, at that time. I merely took note of his utterance and also informed my supervisors about it. Similar warnings were issued to me by the *svikiro* medium, healers and different prophets that I subsequently met throughout the fieldwork that stretched to December 2011. It was only in December 2011 that I started feeling acute pain in my feet. The pain moved all the way up my legs and to my head. It was so acute that at some point I could not walk and I felt my head was getting progressively very hot right on the top. I felt weak and some thickness in my head as if it was inflated. Sometimes I felt soft wafts of wind blow only over my head even as I was sleeping. The illness persisted into my year of writing up and forced me to prolong the fieldwork during which I consulted the prophets to learn more about the illness and how from their point of view it could be resolved.

I could have fallen ill because of the stress that attended studying violence but what surprised me was that prophets, healers and mediums foretold the illness a year and a half before it struck. Though among the villagers time is conceived in terms of the conventional linear trajectory with the future, as exemplified by the uncertainties that shrouded daily existence, unknown; the ways in which the illness was foretold confounded this sense of time. But time among the villagers, as indicated by their attention to the environment in predicting weather patterns, was also gauged on the basis of changes in other things in the environment. The changes in the foliation of plants and in the behaviour of animals and birds provided ways in which time could be read even as the villagers also relied on the conventional clocks. But the prophets, healers and mediums such as those who forewarned me also relied on the *mbepo/mweya* in their vocations. The primacy of the *mbepo/mweya* in this sense was underscored by the medium who when I interviewed her in connection with rain petitioning ceremonies asked the question whether those who regarded her vocation as merely traditional knew when the *mweya* that is in them was born. She asked thus: *ivo vanoti zvatinoita tichikumbira mvura*

*ndizvakare vanoziya here kuti mweya uri mavari wakashyarwa riini?* (Do those who say what we do is traditional and belongs to the past know when the air that is in them was born?).

This comment raised by the medium indicated that villagers did not only rely on what has been understood as oecological time in reference to time measured in terms of the cycles of seasons, the plant and animal behaviours, yearly cycles all of which would render notions of time simply cyclical on the basis of the rhythms. Understanding the *mbepo/mweya*, which was also deemed to connect different things in space and time, as rendering time complicated the notions of time beyond mere cyclicity and linearity. Taking into cognisance these connections via the *mbepo/mweya*, the body can be conceived as one and several, singular and plural, making perceptions of time united yet also differentiated. This appears to explain ways in which healers, mediums and prophets could bring different events lying in different temporal and spatial domains into the kind of simultaneities that characterised the forewarnings about my illness.

Suggested in this is the existence of other senses in addition to the physical senses of contiguous space and time. Such senses may be understood to be activated by the singing and dancing that often preceded the healing and prophetic sessions. Noreen for instance remarked that: “*madzimudzangara taive nawowo, waiti ukaridza ngoma waiona zvimwe zvinhu uyevanhu. Rudzi nerudzi rune mapiriro arwo nzira haingaiti imwebete. Varungu vamwe vaitevedzera chivanhu pakutanga, kana Rhodes aitokumbira pavaisa mireza pasingaiti vosiya*” (We had the likes of television sets and radios. When we beat drums we saw things appear including pieces of cloths and some people. People have different ways of engagement, the way can’t be singular. Some Europeans followed the ways of the inhabitants, even Rhodes requested for places to erect flags, where it was not permitted they did not erect them).

Noreen may well have been referring to instances such as in the early periods of contact where European traders requested for land to set up stations and feiras (markets) which was granted after discussions between Africans and libation ceremonies to protect traders at the feiras see for instance Bhila 1982, see also Burbridge 1923). Inferable from her remark are ways in which *chivanhu* was often mobilised in matters that could be characterised as modern thereby collapsing the temporal binaries between the past and the present. Within the villages for instance, I was greeted with stories about the ceremonies that were conducted over the

previous two years by the Econet Wireless Company that sought the aid of the medium and the chief in setting a booster on the Gombe Mountain which was regarded as sacred. Many other stories about different mountains were recounted but the important thing to note is the way in which different epistemologies with different metaphysical commitments were brought into unity in spite of their differences. Rituals, as ways of bringing together different things, temporalities and spaces could explain the absence of radical distinctions between different modes of engagement (see also Nyamnjoh 2005) in Africa. But they also explain the characterisation of some as simply “traditional” and or “local” highlighting points of difference yet ignoring moments of unity.

In a context where the postcolonial state was understood as visiting forms of violence that replicated colonial modes of violence the radical distinction between the new and the old can hardly be sustained. Similarly in a context where the exigencies of democracy required sacrifices that replicated the sacrifices noted within the so called traditional societies, the radical distinction between the new and the old is unsustainable. In a context where education requires immense sacrifices it can hardly be distinguished from the sacrifices of that which is conventionally regarded as old and past. What changes, so to speak, are not necessarily the games but the pitches and the balls in the epistemic engagements.

While my illness was explicable in terms of witchcraft as well as in terms of the stress from the violence that I studied, it also resembled a rheumatic state which Gelfand (1985: 32, 36) likened to *chipotswa*. In *chipotswa* Gelfand noted that the witch plants poison on a victim's path so that when he/she steps on it or comes into contact with it, it enters his body within which it circulates to other parts. Whichever way the illness is looked at, it signifies that bodies are receptive and permeable even by that which may be harmful to life and among the villagers steps were taken to restore the bodies to their states. But that constitutes resistance to the flows or selection of what could be received by the bodies. Although all forms of knowledge have their forms of rationality and ways of establishing objectivity (see for instance Turnbull 2001) the risks in studying witchcraft make it difficult to work the disparate knowledge systems to create a shared knowledge space in which equivalences and connections between the rationalities can be constructed.

As a mode of prehension, of reaching into each other or grasping, witchcraft (*uroyi*) was deemed among the villagers as destructive not only of lives of individuals but also of the connections between them. The witch hunts and ordeals administered to suspected witches (see for instance Reynolds 1996, Gelfand 1967) as well as the exorcism rituals and protective devices among the villagers underscore the antipathy to witchcraft. The prosecutions of witches through the Zimbabwean Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act of 2006 of which witches were deemed to have been unduly protected by colonial legislation (see for instance Chavunduka 1980, Simmons 2012) officially underscores such aversions to witchcraft. But by relying on healers to render evidence in witchcraft prosecutions (see also Geschiere 1997, Geschiere and Fisiy 1994) they also underline ways in which different epistemologies have been brought together in the litigations. Such official recognition of healers' knowledge in the postcolonial courts necessitates looking closely at ways in which the kinds of knowledge that escaped the radar screen of colonial modernity play out in the postcolonial context. *Ruzivo*, the vernacular kind of knowledge is one such type some of which features eluded modernist epistemologies.

### ***Ruzivo* and Survival**

Some of the ways in which *ruzivo* is acquired in *chivanhu* were underscored in the following experiences. One of the experiences involved an interview with a villager named Hoko. Hoko was born in 1924 and I interviewed him on 1 July 2010. During the interview he said, “*Vadzimu vanonzi mbepo nekuti vakaita sembepo havanaoneki* (ancestors are called *mbepo* because they are like wind they can not be seen). They can possess *mbondoro* lions. *Mbondoro* may not be seen but villagers will see its hooves. *Vadzimu vanobuda pavanhuzve. Kana vanhu vasvikirwa zvinoreva kuti mbondoro iri pedyo. Vanorima nechisi vanoona mbondoro inovachisidzira* (the *midzimu* also manifest in human beings also. When people have been reached by the *mbondoro* it means that the *mbondoro* is close to the human beings. Those who work in the fields during *chisi* days can see the *mbondoro* that frightens them away). Other villagers who work on *chisi* day can see *chapungu* (bateleur eagle) that signifies *midzimu* and it frightens them if they work during *chisi*. He said villagers take *rapoko* to places such as under *michakata* trees and they clap their hands and inform *midzimu* thus, “*tinokumbira mvura nyika yaoma tisvitsireiwo kuna Mwar?*” (we

request for rain because the country is now dry, may you forward our request to *Mwari*). They use the *rapoko* to brew beer for *mukwerera* but now other villagers are young children who do not know what to do. Europeans wanted to *kupingudza vanhu* (to change the ways of life of the inhabitants) that is why they altered our *chivanhu*. They did not want *vanhu* to compete for money with European institutions (*zvechirungu*) *Vakuru vaiziva chivanhu vainzi nevarungu havazivi saka vakadzvanyirira ruzivo rwechivanhu. Varungu vakaramba chivanhu vasingachizivi vasati vapinda mazviri kana machiri, vaiti midzimu mademon zvisizvo.* (Our elders who knew *chivanhu* were labelled as ignorant and this suppressed *chivanhu* ways of knowing. Europeans could not accept the validity of *chivanhu* yet they did not know it and had not entered the lives of the bearers sufficiently to know *chivanhu*, they labelled *vadzimu* as demons which is not correct). Now it no longer rains much because *vanhu vave kubata bata nekuda mari. Mwari nevadzimu vaisada mishonga yakaipa. Kubva kare vaida vanhu vakachena misha yakachena uye nzvimbo dzakachena. Vanhu vave kunamata zvikwambo senyoka dzinorutsa mari saka havachaoni kukosha kwemikwerera. Kunze kwekubatana nevamwe mumikwerera vave kunotsvaga zvikwambo zvinovaunzira mari yavanoshandisa kutenga chikafu kunze kwenyika panguva yenzara saka vanoti mukwerera haisbandi. Vanhu vaikumbira chekudya pasi pemichakata vachipima. Mikwerera yaitwa nevanhu vemisha, misha yaive nevedzinja rumwe chete. N'anga dzemazuvano dzinonyepa chadzinda imari chete* (some villagers rely on *mushonga* concoctions, which are harmful to others, because they want money. *Mwari* and *vadzimu* have never wanted anything to do with such harmful concoctions that people rely on especially these days. They have always insisted on the cleanliness of people, of homesteads and other places. But these days some villagers rely on their *zvikwambo*, for instance those who rely on snakes that they use to steal money from others, so they no longer consider the relevance of *mukwerera*. Instead of joining others in *mukwerera* they now look for *zvikwambo* that give them money which they then use to import food in periods of droughts so they allege that *mukwerera* does not work).

As part of *ruzivo*, in the processes of *mukwerera* on which I dwelt in the previous chapter, villagers were expected to remember the ways in which rituals were done. Hoko noted for instance that: *‘Pfungwa dzinofanira kubata nekuchengetedza zvinhu. Ikozvino vobikira doro remukwerera mumba zvisingabvumirwi. Ikozvino vobikisa vazvere zvisingabvumirwi, kana kubikisa pfambi kana asina kuwanikwa. Ikozvino voreverera vakamira, kana vari pazvituru vakapfeka bhutsu. Vanhu vanofanira kurova makuva, kuremekedza midzimu nevakuru. Zvese izvi zvinofanira kuchengetwa*



*mupfungwa. Pfungwa dzakafanana nemabook dzinochengetedza ruzivo* (The mind should grasp and retain issues.

Nowadays villagers brew the beer for *mukwerera* in the houses (not under *mubakata* trees as required) but then this is not allowed. Nowadays the villagers request breastfeeding mothers to brew the beer for *mukwerera* but this is not allowed in *chivanhu*; they also request prostitutes in the village to brew the beer for *mukwerera* but this is not allowed. Nowadays they inform the ancestors about *mukwerera* while they stand on their feet, sitting on stools or wearing their shoes but then this is also not allowed in *chivanhu*. Villagers should conduct ceremonies to ensure that the dead do not remain in the bush but join others in the *Nyikadzimu*; villagers should respect *midzimu* and other elders. All these things should be retained in the mind. The mind is like a book because it also retains knowledge).

Hoko proceeded to indicate how mediums and *mbondoro* taught villagers. He said: “At *banya* (special huts made for rituals, excluding *mukwerera*, associated with the *mbondoro*) villagers were taught, by the *mbondoro* speaking through the medium, how to retain knowledge so that rituals could continue and so that villagers could learn to copy the ritual processes. Churches are disturbing *chivanhu* because the church members allege that *midzimu* are demons but then the *midzimu* are not demons but holy spirits. The *midzimu* are still alive. For the teachings in the *banya* elderly women, and men and all those who are married attend. The *svikiro* mediums teach villagers in the *banya*. Villagers are reminded how to perform which rituals at what time. They are told to preserve dambo/wet areas and to protect them from cattle. Villagers who are deemed impure for various reasons including prostitution, incest and infanticide are admonished in the *banya*. It always rained when the ceremonies were performed. Often it would rain on the same day even if initially there were no clouds. During the *mukwerera* the villagers were often told by the *mbondoro* to hurry back home before the rain started falling. There is need for more villagers to perform the ceremonies so that the rain can be more widespread”. As a popular epistemology, *ruzivo* does not invariably radically distinguish between visible/invisible, near/far. In this way the violence that is occasioned by visible/invisible, near/far including institutions and witchcraft can be understood as not radically distinguishable. The dreams, divination and prophecies in so far as they are deemed to bridge space and time can be read as popular technologies to collapse time and space in ways that resemble the effects of communication technologies and other modes of virtualities. Although the

information society is often presented as having been created by technology and individual entrepreneurs immersed in innovating (see for instance Burnett et al 2009), dreams among the villagers (see also Reynolds 1996, Gelfand 1956, Okazaki 2003, Krog et al 2009) can also be considered to be alternative everyday life mediums of communication. In the light of rationalist Enlightenment philosophies that displaced the “spirit” world to the realm of psychology the dreams may be understood as hallucinatory thoughts but then with the development of virtual modes of communication, enabling communication with the near/far, visible/invisible, modes of rationality premised on a metaphysics of presence have been attenuated.

Though healers, mediums and prophets have privilege in the modes of engagement, some villagers like Tito, who I met at one of the beer halls when I attended a session where food was being donated by an NGO, doubted the *ruziwo* that healers, mediums and prophets claimed to have. Tito asserted that healers, prophets and mediums are liars. Giving an example of his own consultation of a healer two years back, in connection with his mother’s funeral ceremonies, he indicated that he had been lied to when the healer instead of correctly stating the purpose of Tito’s visit, adverted to a different reason for his visit.

In *ruziwo*, knowledge is acquired not merely by observing things or by physical movement in the environment but also by the movement of the *mweya/mhepo* (conventionally understood as soul/spirit). By physically moving in the environment villagers acquired *ruziwo* about such things as plants, fruits, animals, the weather and soils but as implied in the rituals that healers, mediums, prophets and church members underwent the *mweya* also had to be freed to move beyond the bounds of the body. This significance of linkages between movement and knowing is increasingly gaining attention in scholarship but it is hardly considered in much of the scholarship that focuses on bodily movements in times of violence. In *ruziwo*, to know one is sometimes also to know the invisible that accompany the presence of the visible one. As indicated by the ways in which healers, mediums and prophets treated my presence during the fieldwork sensing the physically present is deemed to tell half or less of the story about one. I was moving in and out of their lives but they paid attention to invisible things including the illness that they deemed to be oncoming. The significance of the freedom of *mweya* to be free to circulate was indicated by some of the prophets who

explained my inability to even dream about my oncoming illness in terms of the need for prayers which involved bathing using milk and water from waterfalls to free my *mweya* and enhance my dreams.

In this way rituals and prayers can be understood as ways of releasing one for circulation not only in the physical sense as in wayfaring (see for instance Ingold 2007) but also in the *mbepo/mweya* sense. The phrase often used in apostolic churches to refer to such release, *kusunungura mweya* (to release or unbind the air/soul) is similarly used to refer to releasing bodies from bondage. What this suggests are multiple ways of circulating knowledge some via physical movement in the environment others via the *mweya*. It suggests different ways of moving and assembling knowledge in the world with some doing so through rituals, art, ceremony while others do so through writing, buildings and other technics (Turnbull 2001). But more importantly it suggests absence of the kind of stasis that is often used to define epistemologies that differ from the formal modernist one.

Such different ways of circulating knowledge in Africa met with disapprobation from colonial officials who superimposed colonial hegemonic epistemologies. In context where for instance Africans relied on what some scholars have called “talking drums or drum language” to convey messages over great distances in short spaces of time (Rattray 1969) the colonial officials were aversive because the methods were also used to evade taxes by alerting others to flee from the taxman (Carrington 1949). It is imperative in rethinking postcolonial epistemology to consider how such forms of knowledge as *chivanhu* can be decolonised but decolonisation of knowledge also entails matters of ethics that will be dwelt on in the next chapter.



## **Ethics beyond Bodies**

### *Ukama* and Ecologies of Violence

The procession walked up the mountain. On the mountain, groups of members of other churches had also camped evidently for days. When our group reached the top of the mountain all of us knelt down to pray before a huge cross that was made of stones. I was informed that the cross was erected by the founder of the church. After the prayers, we proceeded to a spot where we lit fire to warm ourselves over the night. Two of the prophets walked around the mountain looking for a cave in which members of our group would pray. It had been agreed while at the church premise that everyone would get into the cave at three in the morning so that they could pray in it and be sanctified in the cave. There was singing and praying by the fireside until three o'clock in the morning. That morning the procession of the church members went into the cave. The two prophets entered first so that they could help everyone pray. It was very dark and difficult to see where to lay feet or to sit. It reminded me of the dark cave at the Chinhoyi tourist resort in Zimbabwe which I had visited earlier and where inhabitants of the district had found sanctuary from raids during the pre-colonial periods. Men and women in the group held one another's hands as they palpated and fumbled their way deep into the cave. After the prayers we all crawled out of the cave, again in a procession. Just after sunset, the prophets recommended that we visited another cave that was not far from the first one. Again every member was expected to enter the cave. From the mountain we went to a waterfall where everyone in our group was prayed for and bathed using the water at the base of the waterfall. Groups of members from different churches were again present and busy conducting their own prayers at the same waterfall.

Visits to such places as the mountains for purposes of supplication appear not to be new in Zimbabwe where scholars have noted such visits for instance to the Matopo Hills where inhabitants made pilgrimages to consult the voice of *Mwari* (God) in times of problems such as hunger and droughts as well as succession

conflicts (see for instance Ranger 1999, Daneel 1970, Gelfand 1956, Bullock 1927, 1950). Although the literature on Zimbabwe does not adequately grapple with the questions, other scholars have interpreted such places and features in a number of ways. Such places and features have been understood by some using the lenses of immanence where for instance some cosmologies (that presume immanence of God) presuppose that in matter there is immanent power explaining the univocity of Being in all things (see for instance Pearson 2001, Albert 2001, Smith 2001). But such cosmologies premised on the assumption that God is immanent in all things, are challenged by other scholars who argue on the premise that in other societies the whole of materiality is not thought to be overruled by spiritual authority thus doctrines of animatism and animism are unjustified since there are many thing in the environment that are just things (Stanner 2005: 95). Some west African scholars have also argued that Africans do not consider every object to have its own soul but rather they believe that spirits have habitats in some objects or they attach themselves to some objects while retaining their own freedom to move (Opoku (1978: 3, 10). So for Opoku some of these “spirits” are associated with certain features of the environment such as trees, rivers, mountains, rocks but such palpable objects are not, as some scholars think, the “gods” themselves. The palpabe objects are “only dwelling places of the “deities”, for the “deities” are essentially “spirits” and have unlimited mobility, able to come and go at will”. Similar contentions have been aired by Hornung (1983) who noted with respect to Egypt that the Egyptian “gods” may be encountered in luminal spaces where the worlds of the humans and the worlds of the “gods” come into contact. The individual animals are not “gods’ but the “god” only takes his abode in them and they are vessels of his. For Hornung (1983) “gods’ were not restricted to a single place or aspect of nature.

Thus while, in other parts of the world the inhabitants have been noted to practice “nature based religion” which focuses on immanence of the sacred presuming that God is right here in the natural world: in the rocks, trees, mountains, animals, human beings (Klassen 2003), some scholars on Zimbabwe have noted that “spirits” such as ancestors do not habitually live in human beings but come occasionally for some purpose (Hugo 1925). Other scholars have noted the existence of a hierarchy of mediums and *mbondoros* facilitating an elaborate indirect approach to *Mwari/Musikavanbu/Wekumusorosoro* deemed to be in Heaven (see for instance

Mupfema 1968, Abraham 1966). Although inhabitants were noted as pilgrimaging to the Matopo Hills to seek *Mwari*'s advice, scholars have underscored that *Mwari* is "not a fetish God bound by some stick or stone but often passes like a shooting star over the breath of the land, manifesting his presence by a divine fire" (Bullock 1927, 1950). For Bullock, inhabitants had the idea of *denga*/heavens just like Europeans did and they also understood *Mwari* as *Nyadenga* (owner of the heavens). While for some scholars, plants and animals have "spirits" which can take a variety of shapes manifesting themselves as different kinds of being (see for instance Descola 1996: 158), scholars on Zimbabwe have noted that "spirits" of the deceased humans stay in the bush and other places such as rivers at least until rituals of bringing home have been performed (see for instance Fontein 2010, Colson 1971, MacGregor 2003).

These variations between scholars underline differences in metaphysical commitments among groups of people in the world. Though things in the world as Brown (2001: 5) argues tend to index a certain limit or liminality to hover over the threshold between the nameable and the unnameable, the figurable and the unfigurable, the identifiable and the unidentifiable the visits to mountains were nameable and even "spirits" in everyday life were as will argue nameable and identifiable. And in *chivanbu*, a *chinbu* (thing) is not by definition liminal or ambiguous but it denotes something that can be distinguished from *munbu*/ human being. Because in *chivanbu* there are distinctions between things like mountains and God, *chivanbu* differs from the eighteenth century deism and animism that arguably explains the mistranslations of African modes of engagements upon initial encounters with travellers and scholars, in which God was interpreted in terms of "nature" viewed teleologically (Evensky 2005). But *chivanbu* has more to share with Ingold's (2010: 4, 5) observation that a focus on life processes requires us to attend not to materiality as such but to the fluxes and flows of materials. As underscored by his argument that the inhabited world is not composed of objects but things and that life is generative capacity of that encompassing field of relationships within which forms arise and are held in place, Ingold writes within a relational ontological rendition. But relational ontologies have not been found unproblematic in scholarship as a number of concerns have been raised about it. Some scholars have argued that we need to know what relations are in order to decide what we mean by the phrase "relational ontology" (see for instance Wildman 2006). Many kinds of relations have been noted and so the importance of

identifying what relations one will be writing about has been underlined. Relations can be logical, emotional, physical, axiological, mechanical, technological, cultural, moral, sexual, aesthetic, physical, imaginary, and theological and so there is need to specify the kinds of relations one writes about and the values that attach to them. Scholars have also questioned relational ontologies on the premise that if as in relational ontologies, relations are regarded as ontologically primary, and the substantive entities derivative, there is need to specify what kinds of relations are ontologically primary. It has been argued that we also need to know if relations are not mere attributions made by human beings, even if the relations may not be in real existence. While relational ontology presupposes that relations are ontologically more fundamental than the substantive entities themselves, substantivist ontologies, on the other hand, hold that substantive entities are primary and relations are derivative (Paul n.d, Wildman 2006). Although it has been noted that relational ontology holds that objects have no internal constituent structure and no essence or own being, but agglomerations of relations (see for instance Paul (n.d), Wildman (2006), studies of the experience of violence and pain underscore the experience of pain as essentially internal and subjectivist.

Notwithstanding these critiques, life has been shown to be underpinned by different ways of connecting with others. Some scholars have stressed blood and affinal relationships within families (see for instance Mararike 1999, Gelfand 1981), but others have underlined rituals that explain connections beyond kinship groups and among many different kinship groups as well as across territorial ties (see for instance Turner 1968, White 1994, Chatters et al 1994). Other scholars have noted ways in which connections are forged via exchanges between different groups (Levi-Strauss 1970, Keane 1994, Chigodora 1997). Still others have underlined connections via state organisations which welded together different groups of people (see for instance Ranger 1966). Others still have noted ways in which the colonial experience emphasised biological kinship in many parts of Africa even where kinship extended beyond blood ties (Chanock 1982 cited in White 1994). The resulting colonial “tribalisation” and “ethnicisation” (with implications as Lentz 1995 notes of heathenism, barbarianism and lack of civilisation) of identities presupposed more closed autonomous societies even where, as in Africa realities, reflected interlocking, overlapping, multiple and alternative



collective identities defined by mobility, overlapping networks, multiple group membership and flexible context dependent drawing of boundaries (Lentz 1995, see also Ranger 2010, 1984).

So though some colonial officials were preoccupied with establishing rigid “ethnic” and “tribal” boundaries other scholars pointed out the existence of connections beyond the narrow and arbitrary colonial demarcation. As hinted in previous chapter, the *Mwari/Mwali* cult at the Matopo Hills in Zimbabwe has been noted as having extended beyond the Ndebele state and the Rozvi state and even beyond the colonial state (Werbner 1977 cited in Ranger 1979). The *Mwari/Mwali* cult had influence from Botswana’s eastern border district across the south of Zimbabwe into Mozambique and the Transvaal of South Africa and so the supplicants were Venda, Ndebele, Kalanga, Karanga, Kharutse, Ndau and so on (Werbner 1989, see also MacGonagle 2007). Although the *mbondoro* were noted by some as “tribal”, other scholars have indicated that the *mbondoro* were ranked and the highest *mbondoro* had influence beyond the “tribal” confines acting in communion and consulting together on appropriate occasions as the *mbondoro* did (see for instance Muphree 1969, Abraham 1966, Garbett 1966). While the “intertribal networks of *mbondoro* relationships have been noted as having broken down with the creation of reserves which reduced mobility and eliminated the necessity of “intertribal” alliances (Muphree 1969: 45), the fact that the *mbondoro* were considered to be *mweya/mbepo* (see for instance Gelfand 1956) presupposes mobility on their part.

Like in other places where wind has different ways of being known, as meteorological or natural phenomenon, as breath, as spirit or deities (see Low and Hsu 2008: 3) the wind/air in Zimbabwe is variously conceived in terms of “spirits” and in terms of the meteorological senses (for the various conceptualisations of *mweya/mbepo* see for instance (Engelke 2007 Kramer 1993, Werbner 1991, Muphree 1969, Gelfand 1966, 1985). The fact that wind is understood to connect wilderness to hearth, to move from beyond the body to within the body, from the dead to the living, from the quotidian to the divine, connecting people to people, people to environment, near and far (Low and Hsu 2008), underscores the logics of cosmologies and metaphysics underpinning some modes of engagement in *ukama*.

In a context such as Zimbabwe where children were taught to address a whole range of persons as *baba* (father), grandfather (*sekuru*), *amai* (mother), *ambuya* (grandmother) (Pearce 1990), and modes of relating could

not have been limited to blood or affinal ties. Though the predominant mode of relating was conceived in terms of blood and affinal family relationships (Mararike 1999: 156, Gelfand 1981) not only the circulation of blood among the members was important but also the circulation of other things, like resources defined the contours of *ukama*. In a context such as in the villages where totems are commonly used in greetings, where family members stay in small groups in the households, where villagers have rules of succession and inheritance based on ancestry the observations by Mararike (1999), and by Gelfand (1981) have validity. But disruptions in the environment deemed to result from conflicts between human beings (see Vuifhuizen 1997, Fontein 2010, Ranger 2003) portend broader connections and circulations among different things. Much like from the point of view of implicate order metaphysics (see Wildman 2006) where a wave-like entity is thought to link objects behind the scenes in ways that ordinary experience does not register until it emerges as explicate order of consciousness, scholars on Zimbabwe indicated that *mbepo/mweya* (wind/air) is considered to connect different things as it moves to and fro (see for instance Gelfand 1956: 13). In this way it is possible to rethink the vernacular *ukama* not only in terms of blood and affinal ties (Mararike 1999, Gelfand 1981) but also in terms of an ethical outlook that suggests that human beings are “interdependent with all that exists” in (Murove 1999) sense. If *ukama* is understood in terms of interdependency, it can I think be connected to vernacular terms such as *kuvirirana* (to be in harmony/agreement), *kudyidzana* (to eat together/from the same plate), *kufambidzana* (to walk together).

Though others have celebrated secular ethics and civic engagements often premised on metaphysics of presence (see for instance Davetian 2009, Curry 2006) others have pointed out that it is when rites and fears of the invisible are lax that the individual is tempted to break the law and to be a problem (see for instance Gelfand 1956, Bourdillon 1976: 234, Marongwe 2005: 197, 219). While some have argued for a posthuman and poststructuralist ethics as sensitive to openness and difference, holding equally to those who are distant and near, to things other than human (Popke 2003, Waelbers et al 2013, Weinstone 2004, Garner 1997, Bryand 2012) others have noted different ethical and civic engagements. Placing significance not so much on the “laws of nature” (Dobos 2012) that presuppose God is reducible to “nature” but on “spirits”/wind/air, people in various places (Kwon 2010, Fontein 2010, Perera 2001, Lambek 2008, Boddy 1989, Lawrence 2000,

Abraham 1966, Schmidt 1997, Mbofana 2011) can be understood as fashioning their ethical, or variants of civic, engagements. Though mediums have been understood in the colonial era as “witchdoctors” (Chigwedere 1991), the mediums and the *mbondoro* possessing them have been noted as providing space for villagers in the northern part of Zimbabwe to resist government imposed projects which were unpopular among them (Spierenburg 2004).

While such ordinary ethics of the everyday life (see for instance Lambek 2010) are hardly considered in formal political discourses, they open politics to alternative competing conceptualisations in Englund’s (2006) terms where he argues for the need to open up notions of democracy and human rights to alternative African understandings. They suggest the coexistence of multiple public spheres some open spaces and others concealed sites (Ferme 2001 cited in Mbembe 2006). They underscore politics in the margins of state where the state is constantly refounding its modes of order and law making as populations endeavour to secure political and economic survival (Das and Poole 2004). Though the metaphysics of *chivanhu* appear to differ from the Andes where considerations of mountains as “sentient earth beings” are deemed to challenge modern politics and kinds of hegemonic antagonisms it created (de la Cadena 2010), the ethics of *chivanhu* based on *bunhu/unhu*, *tsika* and other etiquette (Muzvidziwa and Muzvidziwa 2012, Mandova and Chingombe 2013, Gelfand 1970, Chivaura n.d, Pearce 1990, Samukange and Samikange 1980) enunciates can be considered to offer space to rethink violence.

This chapter discusses these issues of ethics, morality and *ukama* in the context of the violence that gripped Zimbabwe for more than a decade. To get a sense of the violence, it is important to outline some of its salient features that help ground the chapter.

### **Brief Notes on Politics and Violence in Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwean politics during the period under consideration was a politics founded on polarization on the bases of race, political party affiliation and often also on the basis of gender. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party were polarized and so their members were engaged in interparty violence. There was also

polarisation on racial lines as well as between Zimbabwe and Britain, the former colonial master that the Zimbabwean government accused of trying to prop up the interests of white commercial farmers whose farms were being expropriated. The violence which ensued saw about 40 000 violations of human rights which included torture, assault, threats, rape, murder, arson, confiscation of property (Reeler n.d). Victims of torture were often visited at night, taken from their homes, abducted to bases of militia or of the military where they were tortured (Lovemore 2003). A number of apparatuses were used such as rifle butts, logs, sticks, buttons, booted feet, blunt objects, sjamboks, rubber hosing, tire strips, bicycle chains, electric cables, electricity from the main or from car batteries, water and other fluids for partial suffocation. In this context eight six opposition supporters died in the period preceding the 2008 rerun of the Presidential elections. Ten thousand homes were destroyed, 200 000 people were displaced, 1, 3 million violations were reported (Reeler n.d, Masunungure 2009).

The rule of law which is often assumed to offer protection, at least to those who could afford the legal costs, vanished from the scene. So the majority of the violations of human rights were not processed by the courts partly because some lawyers were also targeted, arrested, beaten and tortured by officials and militias of the ruling party (Pigou 2003). Prosecutors, magistrate and judges were also threatened, intimidated and harassed by the officials and war-veterans (former fighters in the liberation struggle which started in the 1960 and ended in 1980), if they handed down judgments which were not in favour of the government. Some judges were forced to resign and the courts were stacked with judges sympathetic to the government (Pigou 2003). In this context the situation became desperate for those who the government could not protect via the law, it became desperate particularly for those deemed to be against the government who were thus targeted for violence. The desperate situation in Zimbabwe was well captured by Freeth (2011: 189) who noted thus: ‘...the law, the law enforcement agencies, our judges, our neighbours, our own abilities, the human rights agencies, the international community and the church-everything that we believed should protect us seemed to have evaporated. All that was left was God’.

It was in the context of such desperation that the villagers engaged in visits to the places I mentioned above for prayers which they considered to help them evade violence or at least bear with it. Though some visited

such places, others simply prayed within their church buildings. While others relied entirely on the Bible for their sermons others also relied on prophetic utterances from *mweya mutsvene* (literally translated, air of the Holy). Other villagers relied on healers and mediums that performed ceremonies and provided advice to overcome want. So much like in other places where populations resort to alternative modes of surviving violence (Lawrence 2000), the villagers could express their problems in the churches as well as with the healers and the mediums who offered to assist them surmount their challenges. The churches, healers and mediums did not only offer spaces for villagers to express their challenges but through prayers, and rituals they hoped to demarcate spaces of safety for the villagers. The mountains and other places visited for prayers can also be understood in terms of such places of safety where supplicants could express their challenges away from the rest of the villagers and often in the middle of the nights. In a context where church members who were found gathering were often harassed by state agencies suspicious that the gatherings could be used by the opposition party, it is possible to also interpret the withdrawals to mountains and other secluded places by church members as efforts to escape the gaze of the state. The fact that even nonchurch members also often withdrew and sought refuge in mountains and other secluded places underscores the security that such places were deemed to offer. But it was not only the physical aspects that offered security: members of the churches also addressed one another as *hama* (people in *ukama* relationships). They addressed one another as *baba* (father) or as *amai* (mother), *bhudhi* (brother) and *sisi* (sister). Healers and mediums were also addressed as *mbuya* (grandmother) or *sekuru* (grandfather) irrespective of the existence of blood or affinal relations. Although mountains and other places can be understood to have offered such physical security, the villagers looked specifically for places that they considered as being sacred and so during my participation in the churches, I sometimes heard members commenting that they felt that some such mountains we visited were no longer sacred because they had been desecrated or because the *mweya/mhepo* had moved away from them. During the violence, other villagers hid in the mountains simply for the sake of the physical security that the mountains offered. The experiences of Jac underscore such reliance on the physical security of the mountains.

Jac who is one of the villagers in Buhera. He recounted his experiences thus: “In 2002 when I was sitting, clad in my party (MDC) T-shirt, at the shopping centre where I was drinking beer, some unidentified men arrived in a car and started beating up villagers that were at the shopping centre. I did not run away so they asked me why I did not do so. One of them kicked me and another threw a brick which fortunately missed me. Some young men from the nearby Gutu district (immediately to the south of Buhera) who arrived at the shopping centre to pick up a bus to the city of Harare helped me; they found me surrounded by seven people who were beating me up. We eventually won the battle and then my new found friends wanted to burn the assailants’ car but I advised them to desist and to observe the law instead. In 2002 they (assailants and police officers) came to my homestead wanting twenty eight other members of my party in connection with various charges including rape, murder and arson: I ran away. My mother was beaten up by the angry assailants who had missed my house. So while they were beating up my mother, I ran away. I slept in the forest together with colleagues in my party but early the following morning the troubles resumed. I was subsequently assisted by my friends to move to Gutu district where I also secured some employment with an NGO. I had stayed in a mountain, for a month, where I hid together with my other party members. We had food including cabbages supplied and delivered by the United States of America Agency for International development (USAID) which also gave us blankets. I was responsible for writing down the names of the beneficiaries who were with me on the mountain. The USAID vehicle came with deliveries and it would stop by the roadside where we went to pick up the deliveries once in a while. I also carried, with me to the mountain, my small radio over which I listened to the Voice of America (VOA) Studio Seven. I also had phone calls with VOA staff that were based in Washington who I updated daily with information on violence in Buhera. In 2004 my mother died. At the funeral, I was arrested and tortured. My toes were hammered (He pulled off gumboots to show his feet which he said were painful especially when it was cold). I subsequently had an x-ray done by Amani Trust where I still go to for treatments and for counselling after every three months. My wife was raped by ten people when I had taken flight and so we go together for counselling by Amani Trust. My cousin was among the ten rapists”.

As I will explain below, some mountains which were sacred were considered by villagers like *mbuya* Noreen, a *n'anga*, to be manifestations of *hama* on account of villagers' forefathers having been buried in them. Other villagers like Jac simply considered the Gombe Mountain as just a mountain where they sought physical refuge. But church members who endeavoured to break links with *chivanbu* and with ancestors did not share the same such cosmologies with *mbuya* Noreen. Nevertheless, church members and the rest of the villagers including healers and mediums intersected in considering human beings as *hama*. And apostolic church members intersected with healers and mediums in considering *mweya/mhepo* (air/wind), variously conceived though, as connecting things including people. In their modes of engagements, villagers often sought to establish *ukama* even with strangers. For this reason I did not find it very difficult to fit into the matrix of the village context during the fieldwork because the villagers I met endeavoured to establish *ukama* with me as I did with them.

### ***Ukama, Mhepo and Mweya***

When I visited *mbuya* Noreen on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 I found her seated outside her house shelling some nuts. I greeted her; addressing her as (*mai*) mother since during our previous encounters she addressed me as *mwanangu* (my son). I gave her some snuff from the capital city of Harare which she had requested during our previous interview. As I looked for a place to sit on her veranda, she requested her daughter-in-law to bring food for Pil (her son's friend) and me. While the food was being served she considered it important to introduce me to Pil who she mistakenly thought I had not met before. When she intimated the introductions, Pil smiled in a way that betrayed his acquaintance with me. Noreen then posed a question to Pil and me: "*asi munozivana?* (Do you already know each other?). Pil's answer was: "*ndisekuru vangu*" (he is my uncle). Noreen then asked me, "*saka pese paunonya kuno ndiko kwannenge uchibva?*" (So have you been staying at his place all this time you have been visiting me). I nodded and then to Pil she said, "When he (referring to me) first visited me I thought he was a spy. So after his first visit I asked my ancestors who informed me that he is just interested in knowing about *chivanbu*. My ancestors informed me that he is interested in the ways in which we survive and in *chivanbu*".

The notion of *hama* is variously understood by the villagers. One way in which it was understood was apparent in Nota's narrative. I had an interview with Nota on 31 May 2011 and she noted that, "*ndakabatsirwa nevatorwa panguva yekutambudzika. Hama hadzina kundibatsira panguva yekutambura. Vamwene vaitondiseka pakarwara mwana wangu vainditi achafa nenzara. Vaifurira vavakidzani kuti vasawirirane neni. Ini ndakati handina kuvinga shamwari pandakaroowa, handingasiyi imba yangu nekuda kwekuti ndashaya shamwari. Ivo vaiti handifaniri kunyorwa kumadonor kuti nditambire. Imwe nguva ndakati nzara yaruma ndisina chekubata vana endai munopiwa porridge nambuya vaitambira kuDananai. Vana vakadzorwa vasina kupiwa kana chinbu. Ndaiita maricho. Ndakatambura ndikati vekumusha kwangu veukama havanga tumirewo umwe here kundibatsira*". (I was assisted by strangers during the time of suffering. *Hama* did not come to my assistance during the time of troubles. My mother-in-law laughed at me and said I would starve during the crisis. She influenced other villagers to be unfriendly to me but I told them that I was not married in order to have friends in the village. I said I would not abandon my marital household for the sake of friends. My mother-in-law did not want me even to be included on the list of donor beneficiaries. At one time when we absolutely had nothing to eat in the house I advised my children to seek food from my mother-in-law who was on the list of donor beneficiaries and was receiving porridge meal. My mother-in-law however sent back my children without giving them anything by way of food. I survived on piece jobs. I suffered and wondered why not even a single person of *ukama* from my natal home came to assist.")

The other conceptualisation of *hama* was evident in Ruru's account. When I met Ruru on 23 August 2011 she said, with respect to the challenges during the crises period: "*Mwanangu iyi nyaya yekutambura yakaoma iyi uye inondirwadza. Takaoneswa nhamo nehamo dzedu chaidzo pa rerun. Ini pano mombe yangu vakauya zvikanzi tinokumbirawo muriwo ini ndikati handina mombe. Ndakafuma mombe yatorwa mudanga ndikandzwa nevamwe kuti mombe yakatourayiwa. Zvinondibaya moyo wangu. Takarwadziswa nebondo yaSmith, vovedzerazve vatinoti ndivo hama dzedu. Mwanangu chokwadi chaicho ndechekuti muungano dzakaita se matare epamusha, parufu kana padoro chaipo tinoita se paraffin nemvura zvinoti nyangwe ukazvidira mubhotoro rimwe chete paraffin inotizira pamusoro* (My son this story about violence makes me sad. Villagers like me were troubled by our own *hama* during the rerun of Presidential elections in 2008. My cow was forcibly taken away to be slaughtered by the youths. When I woke up one morning, I discovered that one of my cows was missing. It pains my heart. We suffered during Smith's war in the colonial period now we



have suffered again because of the fellow villagers that we call our *hama*. The truth is that in the village gatherings including funerals and beer parties we members of different parties are like water and paraffin which if you pour together, the paraffin will rise to the top while the water sinks to the bottom.

Those who confiscated other villagers' (including my own) belongings should be made to return them and to retribute. If the belongings are not returned, like in my case, there will not be peace in the village until I get back my cow. I have told even the village head; I told him but he did nothing to help. If my cow is returned or compensated, then we can reconcile. If you attend beer parties even if for a short time, in the village you will notice that there are members of different political parties because the villagers will only be opposing and shouting at one another. Even this village was divided into two in 2008 with members of different political parties occupying one or the other side. All this is widening the rift between the villagers who have been failing to reconcile for a long time. In my case, even though I am old, I am not included by the village head on the list of beneficiaries from donors because I belong to the opposition party so I am not given food like is done for other elderly people".)

Although *mbuya* Noreen, who remarked above that Gombe Mountain is *hama yevaHera*, and her husband were not of the dominant Njanja totem they managed to settle within the part of Buhera which is dominated by the people of the Njanja totem. Her late husband was of the Hera totem which is possibly the reason why she stressed that the Gombe Mountain was *hama yevaHera*. As a healer, she was shunned by apostolic church members but among the villagers, her vocation as a healer earned her the title *mbuya* (grandmother) and in her own engagements she forged *ukama* with others by addressing and treating them as *hama*. True to the vernacular saying that "*ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*" (*ukama* is half empty, it can only be filled by eating), she offered food to visitors including strangers like me. In fact in the interviews she remarked that, "*bakuna musba usina muenzi*" (there is no household that has no visitors) underlining the need to treat visitors well and to offer them space to stay. She then narrated her own history in which she noted that she originated from Chipinge but she was given a place in Buhera not only to stay but also to practise her vocation as a healer. In highlighting her place as a healer she noted that healers fell under *masvikiro* (mediums) who could assume the ascending order of *masvikiro edzinza* (mediums of the clans), *masvikiro enzvimbo* (mediums of the areas) and

*masvikiro enyika* (mediums of the country). In her view the *masvikiro* were entitled to control the activities of healers in their territories and to ensure that *nzwimbo dzinoera* (sacred places) were not desecrated by villagers.

The foregoing narratives imply that *ukama* is understood in terms of affinal and blood relationships such as in Nota's account. The conceptualisation of *ukama* by Nota resonates with Mararike's (1999: 165) observation that *ukama* is "brotherhood" in which members of the group are expected to share with one another and find peace of mind through the love of all in the extended family group or kin. The account by Nota also underscores observations by scholars like Holleman (1952) and Bourdillon (1976) that kinship involves patrilineal kinship, mother's kin and that patrilineage include *chizvarwa* family groups and lineages that regulate the production of unilineal and exogamous kin groups with respect to "native" conceptions of incest. But Mararike above noted that *ukama* has no English equivalence; his observation can be understood also in connection with Turner's (1968) comment about another part of Africa that "all Ndembu ritual posits the ultimate unity of all Ndembu in a single moral community". For Turner, the dominant social element in the composition of ritual assemblies is not kinship group but an association of adepts who belong to many kinship groups". For this reason, relations formed by ritual cut across "tribal" affiliation. Though such extended relations have been understood in terms of fictive kinship relations that are deemed to extend kinship status to friend relationships in which members are unrelated either by blood or marriage but regard one another in kinship terms and employ a standard cultural typology likened to blood, sociolegal or marriage ties and parenthood (Chatters et al 1994), the idea of fictive kinship has no equivalence in vernacular terms.

*Ukama* can best be understood in terms of the blood and affinal ties as well as the *mweya/mhepo* ties which *mweya/mhepo* ties explain some *n'anga*'s assertions of *ukama* in relation to sacred mountains in which their forefathers were buried. The idea of *mweya/mhepo* ties shares the logics of the implicate order metaphysics, mentioned above, where things are considered to be connected in ways that may not be immediately apparent. While some sacred places such as the spring which I saw during my walk up the Gombe Mountain had been protected using logs erected around it there were other such places indicated by the villagers which were not protected physically. Even though some villagers such as village headman Behm did not explain how it was possible in view of the sacredness and the power deemed to be possessed by *mweya* some places

were considered to have been desecrated by villagers. He noted for instance that when he was still a young man he used to see and hear *madzimudzangara* (spiritual manifestations) in the vlei three hundred metres away from his homestead but because villagers bathed and washed their clothes at the place using soap the *madzimudzangara* disappeared and now the river was running dry. Similar such stories were narrated by *mbuya* Noreen and the medium of the area who lamented that villagers no longer cared about such sacred places which the medium stated to be villages of such entities such as *mbondoro*.

The protection of the places and the lamentations by the headmen, healers and mediums may well be attempts to assert their power and relevance in a village context where many members had turned to churches. But one may also note that, in view of their cosmologies which presuppose that the dead continue to interact with the living, their lamentations underscore their senses of continuing obligations to the deceased deemed to manifest in other forms albeit invisible to others. While such an ethics can be liable to abuse for instance by those who purport to sense what others can not sense (see also Fontein 2006), the ethics also signal challenges to the kind of conventional metaphysics of presence undergirded by the hegemony of vision. The remarks can be understood in this sense in terms of the significance of ethics to the visible/ invisible, the near/distant others who may not be seen or spoken to by everyone. Similarly the kind of ethics challenges the out of sight out of mind mode of engagement that often accounted for violence under the conviction that no obligations were owed to the out of sight others.

In a situation where compliance is premised on the law and *a fortiori* on identifiable law enforcement agencies evasion of the law and its agencies becomes not only a possibility but an aspiration of perpetrators of violence. But in a metaphysics where, as noted in the chapter on rain, entities such as the *mbondoro* can be deemed to manifest and morph into other forms in order to punish offenders who desecrate the places for instance the possibility of evasion can be more uncertain, at least cognitively. Whereas remarks by the mediums and healers that the *mbondoro* can manifest in a python (*shato*), an eagle (*chapungu*), a baboon (*gudo*) or other such forms in order to scare off and punish offenders might appear to attenuate the possibilities of chancy occurrences, they also diffuse and multiply ways in which offenders can envisage reprisals.

Such forms of metaphysics explicated by the healers, mediums and village heads appear not to sharply delineate between the human and the entities like *midzimu* and *mbondoro* that are deemed to manifest in the human world. But because the *mbondoro* is deemed to manifest in or attach to such entities, much like the *mbondoro* is deemed to manifest in the medium at least for a while in order to exert influence, the other entities themselves were not considered in human terms merely on account of being modes of manifestations of the *mbondoro*.

The fact that the *mbondoro* had moments when he visited and manifested in the medium was indicated by the medium when during my visits to request for interviews she remarked that: “*sekuru havanyi masikati, vanonyi makuseniseni nezuya radoka*” (great grandfather or the *mbondoro* does not come in the afternoon; he comes in the early mornings and from evening onwards). As with healers, the medium’s willingness to let the *mbondoro* enter her body suggests a kind of ethics where *hama* are accommodated even within the bodies of the individuals. Much like in White’s (2001) study in Zululand, South Africa, accommodating the deceased others often involved sacrifices such that healers among the villagers such as *mbuya* Noreen endured a long period of illness as a prelude to her vocation. She was afflicted by an illness when she was in grade three at a Dutch Mission School which because it did not abate in spite of treatment in the hospitals her parent took her to a healer who diagnosed it as a calling to be a healer. She remained a healer in spite of the fact that some healers left their vocations to join the Apostolic Churches some of which I participated in.

Though such accommodation of others was frowned upon by other villagers who considered it risky and devilish to have one’s mind or body entered by such others, it is possible to notice many other ways in which human beings accommodate others, even if subtly. The ways in which villagers accommodated others, in ways that had subtle but similar logics to possession by others, were apparent in Mid’s narrative. She said thus: “It is good to forgive and reconcile but it depends on what was done to you. I want all those who did wrong such as beating other villagers, killing other villagers, confiscating other villagers’ property, destroying other villagers’ houses to publicly apologise in the presence of all villagers who suffered. They should not approach their victims individually and privately because when they victimized them they moved in groups. Meeting with these assailants at parties like *nhimbe* does not make me happy. I agree with the villagers who

want to go and consult *n'anga* or prophets so that those who beat up and killed other villagers can experience retribution. That way they will be forced to approach their victims to seek reconciliation. As we talk, there are two brothers who are failing to work together in their family because the elder brother pulled out the younger brother's eye. They can not even talk to each other such that reconciliation and forgiveness are impossible. Even if the villagers who stole other villagers' livestock are ordered to return or retribute, they haven't got the means any more. So they should be beaten in the same way they beat other villagers up. That way they can be forced to go and look for means to return what they stole. In my case, it is because I can't find a good *n'anga* that I haven't reacted to the violence in the way I want. I would want to consult a *n'anga* that can paralyse the assailants and those who stole property like livestock, destroyed homesteads, beat up and killed others. They should rebuild the houses they destroyed. What is painful is that no single victim has had his or her house rebuilt by the assailants and no property has been returned or restituted. Some villagers are no longer attending churches because of fears of meeting their political opponents. *Chokwadi chinbu chokuuta wakaputirwa chinonyadzisa. Paunozo pengenuka unotanga kuona kushata kwekuta kwako kwese* (It is true that when you do things whilst under the influence/possession by other people's ideas it is shameful. When you recover from the influence/possession you begin to see the offensiveness of all your actions). There is a family I know in which members support different parties. The sons and daughters in that family have since stopped to materially assist their father who is of a different party".

The remarks by Mid above about *kuputirwa* (to be covered/possessed by other people whose ideas grip and overwhelm one's mind) and *kupengenuka* (to recover from the influence or possession by the ideas of others) suggest that ideas that are purveyed by other people assume the logics of possessing other villagers in similar ways that some villagers were deemed to be possessed by *mweya/mhepo*. It is possible in this sense to argue that the media which was for instance relied upon by the state to purvey its ideologies, including about violence against others, entered the minds and bodies of those who were thereby influenced by it. It is equally possible to argue that the ideas that villagers shared entered minds and bodies in ways that unhinged or exacerbated dichotomies between the self and the other, at least temporarily. The ideologies of the political parties which saw party members and supporters clashing within the villages and throughout the country can

be understood to have used the bodies and minds of the activists as vehicles of the political parties. They may be understood to have possessed the ideas but in the light of regrets which were subsequently expressed by some who perpetrated violence, they can also be understood to have been possessed by the ideas instead. Narratives, as I will note below, for instance about villagers who became shameful and took to staying, often lonely, in the mountains out of the shame for having perpetrated violence against their fellow villagers can be understood to indicate moments when ideas take hold of individuals' minds and bodies followed by recovery from such possession by the ideas of others.

Although attempts have been made overtime in history to secularise notions of civility, which had origins in the church, (see for instance Davetian 2009) and in spite of attempts to demarcate between the public and private spheres during the colonial era (see for instance Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), the partial connections between possession by ancestors and possession of for instance activists by ideas underscore the arbitrariness of such dichotomies. If civility is a function of ideas which like *mweya/mhepo* possess one, to radically and arbitrarily distinguish between things that possess individuals can amount to incivility, particularly where those defined as uncivil have not been asked to agree to share and agree to the narrower versions of such civility. The contestations about civil society in Zimbabwe (see for instance Helliker *et al* 2008) can be understood in terms of the binaries it arbitrarily presupposes between state and society, civil and uncivil, traditional and modern as well as in terms of its own internal contradictions and conflicts. The sacrifices it exhorts citizens to make in its confrontations with the state apparatuses can hardly be distinguished from the sacrifices in what it often wishes away as traditional societies, in oblivion to the fact that time as lived is not invariably linear. The indications among villagers that they would resort to *n'anga* and other nonconventional ways of coping with violence confound the conventional notion of civility and as is evident in Tsaki's experiences.

Tsaki who I interviewed on 4 June 2011 said thus, "I can't forgive those who assaulted me in 2008; it does not work because there are certain things one can not forgive. My daughters were raped and infected with HIV/AIDS so I do not know how to forgive in these instances. Yes the assailants should return the things that they stole, but who is going to do so when the things were stolen by many assailants. Even if you

apprehend one of the assailants, he/she will simply say 'I was being sent' but if you ask the people who they claim sent them, they will simply ask if you saw them steal your things. I will go to a *n'anga* to look for *mushonga* (herbs) that will help inflict pain or bring the assailant to negotiation. With respect to those who stole my things; the *n'anga* can make them insane or they can kill them because they also killed. Villagers should look for ways (*mbindu*) for retribution or restitution because for villagers to live together without negotiating for the return of stolen things or without the rebuilding of houses is difficult. But during the negotiations there is the likelihood of conflicts arising. I am looking for a *n'anga* secretly and I am retributing secretly. Up to now I have managed to kill three herds of cattle, belonging to my opponents, using cotton pesticides which are concentrated. I dip the leaves of maize into the pesticide, I get into the kraals and I give them to cattle. The cow that I give, I know it is dead. *Izvi ndinozvita pasi pechirongwa chandinoti 'operation chipoko/chidhoma'*. *Chipoko chinonetsa vanhu vavata uye vakamuka* (I do all this under what I call operation *chipoko/chidhoma* (witch familiars). The *chipoko/chidhoma* troubles people when they are asleep). The cattle that I fed with the poisonous cotton pesticide were found dead the following morning and the owners threw away the carcasses because they did not want to consume the meat from the cattle that died mysteriously. I do not want to co attend parties with the assailants. Some of the assailants stopped attending church services because during the sermons we often gave examples which they felt verged on calling them names. So, to end the troubles villagers who are members of different parties can separate their ways and not co attend village parties. In cases where family members are members of different parties, this is a sign of lack of order in the families concerned; it is a sign of lack of foresight".

Civility can hardly remain civil if it retains the tyranny of linear time as well as of evolution that defines others as belonging to the past and some to the present. As is evident in the case above, villagers often relied on *n'anga* to resolve and or cope with present day challenges. As evidenced also in the case of Econet Wireless, referred to in the preceding chapter, which sought to set up a booster on the Gombe Mountain, the past and the present, are often played together. The medium, healers and village heads informed me during interviews that subsequent to challenges in setting up the booster on the Gombe Mountain which is considered by the villagers to be sacred, Econet Wireless eventually approached the chief who consulted his

medium. The medium then advised Econet to provide goats and a cow so that propitiatory rituals could be performed. The Gombe Mountain was considered sacred on account of some deceased inhabitants, that is, forefathers of the Hera people, that were buried in it and whose *mveya/mbepo* were deemed to have abode in the mountain. The healer, *Mbuya* Noreen for instance commented that: “*Gombe rinozi hama yevaHera, vana Mbiru na na Mutekedza vakavigwa imomo*” (the Gombe Mountain is called a *hama* of the *hera* people, their deceased ancestors such as Mbiru and Mutekedza were buried in it). But other mountains in the area further away from my fieldwork site were referred to as “*homwe yevaHera*” (pocket of the *Hera*).

Such places as the Gombe Mountain have been burial sites for senior ancestors and they often marked out the territories of chiefs (see for instance Ranger 2003: 73). With respect to the Gombe Mountain Mbiru, the forefather of the villagers of the Hera totem was reported to have also used it as *guta* (city) and for this reason it is marked by ruins (see also Beach 1980). Though *mbuya* Noreen remarked that it was *hama yevaHera*, the mountain was also visited by church members to do prayers in it despite the fact that they did not subscribe to the perceptions of the healers and mediums. Though healers and mediums on the one hand and church members on the other differ in that healers and mediums claim to operate through ancestors while church members claim to appeal to *Mwari*, healers and mediums also hold that ancestors are mediators to *Mwari*. While in both cases *Mwari* was understood to be *Musiki* (Creator) and *Nyadenga* (the one who resides in heaven) there were important differences in terms of ways to appeal to Him. But *mbuya* Noreen’s assertion that Gombe Mountain is *hama yevaHera* can also be interpreted against the contestations by mediums of the Njanja and of the *Hera* to perform rituals on behalf of Econet Wireless. Though in my earlier meeting with her, the medium of the Njanja, stated that she was entitled to perform the rituals, *mbuya* Noreen held that it was the medium of the Hera who was supposed to perform the rituals as according to her the mountain was a *hama* of the Hera whose ancestors were buried in it. If the Econet Wireless case is viewed in terms of European Eighteenth Century deism, that has similar logics to the idea of animism, where God was conceived in terms of “nature” (see for instance Evensky 2005) it can be understood to have pursued a route different from churches, healers and mediums who conceived God as not invariably immanent in the mountain and in “nature”.



Although healers and mediums sometimes accommodated their deceased ancestors in their bodies, *ukama* can not be merely understood in terms of interiorisation of *hama*. When villagers indicated that so and so was a *hama*, they did not necessarily refer to something interiorised and interiorisable but also to externalities connected to them. Even in the case of healers and mediums the ancestors were not deemed to be always immanent in their bodies and even in the mountains as well as other features: the ancestors were more like visitors that sometimes found space to lodge in human bodies, in mountains and other features that they used temporarily as vehicles to exercise their influence in the human world. As in the case of the medium, the *mbondoro* could also be understood to influence her from without. During one of my interviews, which I refer to at length in the chapter on droughts, with the medium I was convinced that I was talking to her but when, latter, I interviewed her during possession by the *mbondoro*, and the *mbondoro* informed me that he was present during my earlier interview and that he told his medium what to say to me from the background. For this reason the *mbondoro* asked me what else I wanted to ask him since he had been present during my earlier interview with his medium. It was after insistence that there was more that I wanted to know that he agreed to the interview but he started by forewarning me about the oncoming illness which I dwelt on in the previous chapter. What this portends is that in such cosmologies *mweya/mbepo* do not necessarily only possess in the conventional sense of being embodied but that they can also exert their influence by attaching themselves to mediums from without.

Nevertheless *mweya/mbepo* whether of the deceased that are deemed to be good or bad is conceived to sometimes possess human beings by taking over their faculties and bodies. Apart from the possession sessions I witnessed, there were stories among the villagers to the effect that those who desecrated sacred places were visited by mental illnesses on account of reprisals from *mweya/mbepo*. (See also Matikiti 2007, Marongwe 2005). There were also narratives about *ngozi*, that is, the deceased deemed to return from the dead to afflict the living by way of reprisals (see also Gelfand 1970, Gelfand 1966, Bourdillon 1976: 234, Fontein 2010, Schmidt 1997, Reynolds 1996, and Mbofana 2011). Such claims about the dead being witnessed (see also Perera 2001, Honwana 2005), returning and getting lodged in human bodies (see for instance Boddy 1989) and being rendered attention by the living (see also Kwon 2010) are widespread in many parts of the

world such as Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Mozambique and other parts of Africa. Although it has been noted that fear of such “spirits” could act as a sanction for ethical behaviour (Bourdillon 1976: 234) and that conceptions of such “spirits” apart from influencing ethical behaviour and virtues of the Shona, also influences their attitude to *hama* (Gelfand 1970), such dead have been noted to visit a lot of suffering to women. Deemed to lodge in women’s bodies even if the deceased were males (see also Boddy 1989), the avenging deceased also understood to demand compensation in the form of livestock and a young girl for a wife and mother of a replacement for the deceased (Schmidt 1997), such deceased are portrayed as meting collective punishment within the families of offenders necessitating collective responses among the *hama*.

If interpreted in terms of the conventional psychoanalytic notions of the unconscious, possession by such deceased assume the hue of individual mental illness but if the possession is interpreted in terms of the emerging field of relational psychoanalysis (see for instance Mills 2005, 2012) the presumed connectedness of issues becomes easier to surface. Such a relational psychoanalysis makes it possible to envisage the emotional transmutations, meaning construction and the connectedness of the individuals and families afflicted to their contexts of violence. Insisting on possession merely as a manifestation of the unconscious, against the villagers’ own interpretations of it as conscious afflictions by wronged deceased would amount to appropriation of their voices yet as Das (2012) persuasively argues it is important to hear the voices of sufferers of violence, some of whom may be averse to appropriations of their voices (Ross 2003). Yet insisting on relational ontology in the way relational psychoanalysis does fails to adequately account for violence, in this case among the villagers, as observed by Butler in her debate with Cavarero (Clercq 2013). Butler for instance argued that the relational ontology that Cavarero proposed gave a model of the human to aspire to but the ontology could not tell why nations went to war and why they deprived others of their humanity (Butler and Cavarero 2009: 134 cited in Clercq). Butler’s remark underscores the fact that as much as the formation of the subject is dependent on others it is also constituted through foreclosures that explain the emergence of the “I”.

The villagers’ conceptions underscore the absence of decomposition of subjectivity, the psyche and personal identity in relation to possession even by vengeful deceased (that temporarily possess victims) but

they also highlight the liminality of the subjectivities of the possessed. I met Hum on 30 June 2011 at his homestead which is not far away from the village shopping centre. I had been informed that he and his family had recently consulted a healer to resolve afflictions of his family by what is known in vernacular as *ngozi*. I requested him to render his views of the *ngozi*. Hum began by noting that he understood it as the *mweya* (air) of a person, who has been innocently killed, that returns to afflict the murderers and their families. Hum noted that one of his daughters appeared to be beside herself because one of his family members killed another man whose *mweya/mbepo* had returned to haunt the family and this air was manifesting in his daughter. He noted that there were moments when his daughter manifested “possession” when the voice of a man who claimed to have been murdered spoke through her narrating how he was killed. Hum pointed out that his daughter was considered by other villagers as insane because they could not understand what she was narrating and why she spoke in a male voice. The voice of the murdered man informed Hum’s family that the murdered wanted compensation consisting of a number of cows to be paid to a relative of the deceased.

Although Hum’s daughter was married before the *ngozi* allegedly started afflicting she was returned to her natal home following her affliction with the *ngozi* which was understood to have been claiming her for a wife in compensation for the murder. Hum and his family were subsequently advised by an elderly villager, who suspected it could be *ngozi*, to consult prophets and healers. Although his daughter became normal after the interventions of the prophets, after about a year the *ngozi* returned and started afflicting her again. So one day she severely beat up her husband for no apparent reason. Just after the beating she spoke again in a male voice accusing her husband of having “snatched” its wife (Hum’s daughter) away.

Such cases where “spirits” of the deceased including males who after dying in war are understood to possess women thereby reversing gendered bodies are widespread in Africa (Boddy 1989) but as in the case of Hum, they can be understood to signal some connections which may or may not be at the conscious level. But in cosmologies where changes in behaviour are explained in terms of such *mweya/mbepo* that is understood to move in and out of bodies, things that one may be (un)conscious of lie as much in the body/mind as outside them. In connection with a question on the *mweya/mbepo*, Mbuya Noreen, the healer, for instance remarked that: “*vanhu vanopfekwa nemweya, ngozi indvise chero mumburi*” (literally, people are worn by the

air, the air of the aggrieved deceased cause conflicts even in the families). But if looked at in the context of the political violence that marked the villages and the country, Hum's daughter can be understood to have been violent to her husband because ideologies of violence had become a way to address grievances, however vile. However the logic in both instances is one where the individual is understood to have been infected by connections to others making violence a function of such connections.

What this implies is that it is not merely connections that matter in addressing violence; rather it is the quality and character of the connections. In this sense it was not just the marriage that mattered for Hum's daughter but the quality of that marriage. Equally for Hum it was not just a daughter that mattered but also the quality of the daughter which explains his attempts to have the *ngoz'i* exorcised so that his daughter could be freed from the perceived connections with the *mweya* of the aggrieved dead man. If the fact that the *ngoz'i* was understood to be going away and coming back is interpreted in the broader political context where citizens made efforts to vote away some political officials, it portends the wider concerns about quality in their connections with others who could not have simply accepted valedictions.

Such everyday life where troubles kept coming, going, returning, often in disguises as underscored in accounts of perpetrators of violence who (as I will show below) sometimes wore masks, in spite of efforts to keep them at bay can best be understood in terms of hauntology. Tsaki's assertions above that he surreptitiously poisoned the cows belonging to his opponents using cotton pesticides, in his "operation *chidboma/chipoko*", underscores the salience of the notion of hauntology among the villagers. Conceived by Derrida (1993, 2006) to supplant its near homonym in ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive, hauntology is useful in explaining the realm of everyday life among the villagers. While Derrida wrote about hauntology with reference to what he called the spectre of Marx which he understood to haunt Europe at the end of the Cold War, I use the term hauntology in understanding ways in which everyday life ethics are often premised on the possibilities of being haunted by the other.

The spectre being for Derrida a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence in ways that make established certainty vacillate, speaks to the modes of life in everyday contexts

where the dead are conceived as not so dead and as coming back in ways that unsettle certainties about death and life. But such a spectre also speaks to the ways in which in the everyday life violence and war kept coming back even though for instance the war of independence that ended with independence in 1980 was deemed to have ushered in a period of peace, the government's violence from 2000 which it dubbed the "Third Chimurenga" can be understood to have generated a spectre that haunted its victims. In a context where secular systems of justice and coping were not available and where trust in them had deteriorated (see also Perera 2001) the law itself became a spectre hovering between presence/absence, life/death. So although claims of having been visited by the dead characterised village life there is more to hauntology than narratives of encountering the dead in the conventional sense. There are often constellations of forces that coincide in various ways in life; organised forces and systematic structure that appear removed from everyday life make their impacts felt in ways that confound some separations (see also Gordon 2004: 19).

So on a broader level, the illegibility, caprices and invisibility of the state as well as other institutions (that failed to curb violence among the villagers) in everyday village life (see also Das 2004, Das et al 2000, West 2003) can be understood to have instantiated their spectral presence. Yet as underscored in accounts of pain and suffering such spectral presence did not necessarily render subjectivities decomposed as intimated in scholarship on the death of the subject. In the context of the spectral presence of citizens in the diaspora who communicated via the internet and other media offering support for those back home, it can be argued that some spectral presence actually propped the subject by creating spaces for resilience. Thus, whether viewed as spectral presences that visited healers and mediums or in terms of other forms of spectres, hauntology presupposes an ethics that is attentive to the other near and far yet it is often the near and visible that is targeted in violence.

The privileging of the visible in violence was suggested in a remark by Ked, a youth and opposition party member, who noted during a conversation, rather emotionally that: "*Kana masvikiro akapindira mberi munhu anoti ndingatye zvandisingaoni ini ndichida kuuraya wandiri kuona here. Vangatourayive masvikiro acho*". (If *svikiro* mediums dissuade murderers from killing, the murderers would want to know why they should fear the *ngozi* which they can not see when they want to kill those they can see. The mediums themselves will be killed if

they intervene in such ways). Viewed in the context where mediums and the *Mwari* Cult used to provide not only “transtribal” connections but also buffers against misrule by individual chiefs and kings (Abraham 1966, Muphree 1969), this remark suggests ways in which secularisation of politics explains some forms of violence. Although attempts to re-enchant the world can be inferred from scholarship that claims that God has been virtualised in net space (see for instance Kroker 2004) and that gods are present in every object in the cosmos, the situation in the everyday village life is more nuanced than that. Such nuances were apparent in the violence and in the accounts of it as shown in the subsection on ecologies of violence.

### ***Ukama and Ecologies of Violence***

I met Peel on 8 June 2011. After taking a sigh, Peel noted that the political violence in the country caused her great wounds in her heart. She then stated thus: “My daughter was killed as if they were killing an animal of the forest (*mbuka yesango*). She had not done anything wrong. How can I forget all this when the murderers are freely walking up and down the village right in my eyes? I used to be a member of ZANU PF but they caused me great suffering in 2008. I can not work together anymore with the murderers. For this reason, I now do not even attend funerals for ZANU PF members in my village. I do not care even if they also do not come to attend funerals in my own family. I do not even go to church anymore because one of the church leaders is father to one of my daughter’s killers. So how can I pray and get responses from God whilst the murderers are right in my face. The murderer’s father also gets very angry when he sees me. He gets angry with me on the allegation that I have exposed his son for killing my daughter. Although his son was eventually traced and apprehended in connection with the murder, he only stayed in the cells for three months”.

Peel went on to state that: “*mushonga wengozi kuripa nokuti mweya nemunhu wakasiyana newembwa yaunongouraya zvopera zvakadaro*” (the offenders’ only way is to pay compensation because a person’s wind/air is different from that of a dog that one can kill without facing the possibility of being afflicted by the wind/air). While the remarks may be read to suggest that only human beings have such wind/air, villagers like Nuh also noted for instance in relation to consecrated cows that: “*mweya unoti uri pamombe uku uri pamunhu*” (the air alternates

between using the human body as a receptacle and using the cow's body as a receptacle). Similarly noting the ways in which *mweya* can be present in some places and things, *mbuya* Noreen, another healer noted that: *mweya wevasina kurohwa makuva uri kumashizha*'' (the wind/air of those for whom ceremonies have not been conducted is in the forest).

Peel's experiences underscore ways in which surviving violence is often based on distancing oneself from perpetrators much in the same way other citizens fled to the diaspora. Yet in spite of distancing herself physically and emotionally from the perpetrators, she hoped that her deceased daughter would retain connections with the perpetrator and be vengeful to them.

Similar sentiments to Peel's, about the dead acting on the living offenders, were vented by Hoto. I met and interviewed Hoto on 2 June 2011. Hoto's wife had been killed in violence. In his account he said, "Villagers in my ward were the first victims of violence in the year 2000. One day in 2007 villagers, like me who supported MDC, had to run away just after sun rise because assailants were approaching. Others villagers who could not run away were beaten up. My wife could not run away so she was beaten up and trampled upon as we watched helplessly from a distance. At her funeral, my in-laws charged the marriage payments they wanted and we agreed. But among the assailants was one of my cousins. The need for forgiveness and reconciliation that you have just mentioned is difficult in situations like this. I agree that it is good to forgive and that it was violence of that time (2000s) that took my wife but if a person, such as in my wife's case, has been killed the thoughts keep coming. My cousin who was among the assailants did not even attend my wife's funeral as well as the *nyaradzwo* (consolation ceremony). At the time of the funeral and even after the violence he stayed in the mountain as if he was a baboon. Now he has returned back home. Noone has asked him why he killed my wife but he appears to be regretting now. I do not attend *mabira* (ceremonies in *chivanhu* performed for the dead) because of the doctrines of my church but I attend *nyaradzwo*. When the assailants see me at *manyaradzwo* in the village they immediately go back to their homes. Because they do not want us to meet how can we reconcile? If they want to consult *n'anga* they can do so but I will not consult *n'anga* or even prophets. I won't consult *n'anga* in connection with the fact that my wife was killed because my in-laws and I agreed not to do.

*Mwari pamwechete nevhu ndinoona zvinotaura kudarika isu vapenyu. Muna 2007 ngoro yevamwe waitungamira vaipfuura napamba pangu mombe yakambanya dzakananga pamba. Mukuda kudzora mombe ngoro yakarova imba ikatsemuka. Vaiva nemombe vakashaya chokuita ndakavati vaende uye handidi zvekutaura nazvo nokuti chokwadi tose hatina kuziva kuti chii chakaita kuti zvidaro. Mombe dzeumwe aizviti mukuru mukuru dzakatanga kungofa dzoga. Ini ndinofunga kuti kudzororana uye norumwe rutivi mucherechedzo wekuti vanhu tauriranai. Handidi kuti vanhu vazoti akapfuma nokuripinwa pakafa mukadzi wake. Ini pfuma yangu ndinoshandana ndega. Kukumbira ruregerero nomuromo kwakanaka fani. Kana pasina kutaurirana hapana rugare. Sokuona kwangu vanhu vakatorerwa zvinhu zvavo vanofanira kudzororwa zvavo. Ini handioni kuti kubata buku kana mbudzi kwaive nechokuita ne politics. Kunzi munhu pachivanhu unenge uine musha nezvipfuyo. Zvino kana ongonyo otera chokwadi kana bndive unopaona sei? Kupinda church tingapinde bedu tose asi shoko kune anembosva haripindi.”* (God together with the soil (the murdered wife), I think can communicate more than us the living. In 2007 the scotch cart belonging to the leader in the violence that took my wife rammed into my hut. The leader did not know what to do after that but I told him I did not want to talk much about that with him so he had to immediately proceed to his home. The cattle belonging to one of the leaders in the violence began to die mysteriously. In my case I do not want other villagers to say that I got my riches by way of compensation from those who murdered my wife. I work in order to be rich. But requesting for forgiveness when one does wrong is a good thing. When there are no talks or negotiations there will not be any peace. I think villagers who lost their property to assailants should be compensated. I do not see the link between politics and the confiscation of goats and chicken belonging to other villagers. To be considered a person in *chivanhu*, one has to have a home and property. So if the assailants just come and take the property of others away, how do you see that? We can attend the same churches but the sermons will not be effective for those who did harm to others.”)

These two sets of experiences by Peel and Hoto need to be considered together with the experiences of Nhunha whose family was torn apart by the violence. Nhunha noted that: “*Muna 1990s upenya hwemburi hwaiva nani nokuti zvinhu zvaisadhora sezvazvare kuita mazuva ano* (Life in the 1990s was better because things were different from what they are these days). My husband was a security guard in the capital city of Harare and though he was getting a small salary we were able to buy food for the family. I have stayed in this village since



the 1990s and my husband would always come every end of month. *Nyaya yemari yakaoma iyi* (The story about money is difficult to recount), you know that with a dollar you would buy things; the Zimbabwean coin (dollar) could buy things in the 1990s. *Saka chero murume wangu aiuya ne Z\$50 tairarama zvakanaka tichwana mari yechigayo, sugar nezvimwewo. Muna 2000 kwakatanga kunetsana MDC ne ZANU PF. Mitengo yakashanduka zvikuru ichikwira zvisina nematuro ese. Takatanga kushoterwa nezvokudya nokupfeka. Yakazoti nzara ya 2002 yanya veduwee takanonga svosve nemuromo. Mitengo yainge yakukwira mari yaitambirwa yainge isisatengi zvinhu zvizhinji sekumashure*”

“Nzara iyi yakatisukuta apa taive nevana four. Taipona nemuriwo nokuti taive tisina kukobwa taiponawo nechakata. Chimwe chakazotiraramisa ibhinzi neupfu hweKenya zvaitambiriswa vanhu ne Christian Care. (So even if my husband gave me Z\$50 we could survive, being able to buy sugar and other items as well as take grain to the grinding mill. In 2000 the MDC and ZANU PF parties started opposing each other. The prices began to rise inexplicably. We ran short of basic food items and we could not even afford to buy clothes. When the drought of the year 2002 struck, we suffered very much. Prices kept on rising until the earnings we had could not buy anything. We suffered the droughts particularly because we had a bigger family, with our four children. We survived by eating vegetables and *chakata* fruits from *michakata* trees [also called *pari capensis*, mentioned in chapter one]. We also survived by relying on the beans and mealie meal that we received from Christian Care.”)

*Ini ndakapinda pfumvu kuma 2000s* (I got into deep trouble in the 2000s). My husband was a member of MDC. In 2008 during the rerun of Presidential elections we felt unsettled because members of ZANU PF were moving around the villages beating up every villagers suspected of supporting MDC.”

One day when I was asleep in the bedroom, with my children, I heard a knock on the door. I estimated it was at 10 pm because we had been in bed for a long time. I asked who it was when I heard many other knocks on the door. They (the knockers) did not disclose their names but they only said ‘open the door’! I was gripped with fear. The door was kicked with force and it swung open. Two men entered but I heard some more voices outside the house suggesting that they were more than two present. They threatened me that if I made any noise they would kill me together with my children. I did not want to die for the sake of my children. The men had their faces covered with cloth leaving only small aperture for their eyes. Both of them

raped me, taking turns such that while one raped me the other was pointing a knife at me. My children were asleep all this while. At day break I informed my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law that I had been raped. I also reported to the police and my husband who was then in Harare was invited and he came to the village. What pained me more was that my mother-in-law and sister-in-law (who were supporters of MDC like me and husband) alleged that I had not been raped but that I had had sex with my boyfriends. The police have not apprehended the rapists. My husband was so pained by this experience that he decided not to go back to his workplace in Harare but has since stayed with me in this village.”)

The notions of *mweya/mhepo* in *chivanhu*, the notion of the soil (in reference to the deceased) and the idea by the *n'anga*, referred to above, that the Gombe Mountain is *hama yeva* Hera all suggest complications to the idea of immanence that is central to animistic portrayals of modes of engagement in other regions of the world. If one considers Fontein's (2006) argument that for the Shona people, ancestors and *Mwari* do not turn into place though they use certain objects in the environment as vehicles through which they exercise influence in the human world, one would be inclined to think that the mountains and the soil and other features in the environment are merely used, if temporarily, as vehicles to exercise influence without the deceased necessarily assuming immanence in the features. In this sense the deceased and *Mwari* can be understood to temporarily attach themselves, in Opoku's (1978) sense even from without the objects in order to exercise influence in the human world. Considering the dead as turning into soil would be contrary to *chivanhu* modes of engagements whereby they perform rituals like *kurova guva* which are meant to *kudzora mufi* or bring back the deceased into the household and into the *Nyikadzimu*. The ritual among the villagers of *svitsa* that marks the arrival, after a year of death, of the deceased into the world of *Nyikadzimu* underlines the significance placed on the deceased's *mweya/mhepo*, rather than on the *mutumbi* (body) which would have been buried, in *chivanhu*. In this ritual what is brought back into the family is the *mweya/mhepo* of the deceased and not the material remains. In *chivanhu*, it is the *mweya/mhepo* of the deceased that is deemed to journey to the *Nyikadzimu*. When villagers dream of the dead, they claim to see their (astral) figures identical with their appearances when still alive. When Hoto spoke about the “soil as speaking more than the living”, it is important to take into cognisance the ambivalences, which indicate that the soil is not animated (by the dead) because he contrasts it with the

living but is temporarily used by, *mveya/mbepo*, as vehicles to exercise influence, in his statement. Therefore the statement that the soil speaks more than the living suggests that the soil is not inherently living, it opposes the soil to the living and suggest that the soil is not alive in the same way as human beings (even if the dead corpses are buried in it of which deceased as in Hoto's wife also have *nyaradzwo* conducted for them to go to Heaven). The *chivanhu* rituals that Godobori, referred to above, mentioned including *kusunungura vadzimu* (to release ancestors or to have them unlocked from the blocking, or *kutsipika*, by witches) imply that ancestors do not have to be locked up or imprisoned in matter but they have to be free to move back and forth from *Nyikadzimu*. In this sense *kutsipika vadzimu* or *kusunga vadzimu* that is locking up ancestors in places/in matter or disabling them to move freely is deemed an act of witchcraft that necessitates counterterrituals. If in *chivanhu* the soil itself was considered to talk and the dead were considered to turn into place including into soil, one would have expected villagers including Hoto himself to consider the activities that they all did such as ploughing and walking on the soil to be violence, in the human sense, on that soil. Equally in the context of Hoto's statement, one would not have expected villagers to seek human mediums that they often pay, to mediate between the living and the dead. And in Hoto's case I would have been expected to hear or to be assisted to talk to the soil just like I talked to other informants. In a context where modes of survival have, since the pre-colonial times, been more fluid than subsequently envisaged by colonial authorities and scholars who rigidified African modes of engagement (Jeater 2007), to conceive things in *chivanhu* in terms of immanence risks rigidifying again the otherwise more fluid modes of life in everyday life. As noted by other scholars "spirits" travel to various places (Lambek 2010) and therefore they are not necessarily imprisoned or locked in one place or in particular features in the environment though they can use the features as their vehicles, even if temporarily or once in a while. It is therefore possible to argue that ancestors and God are (deemed to be) benevolently near (see also Zuesse 1979) in times of crises and that when they are near or in the human world, they seize not only human mediums but also they attach themselves to other objects that are used as vehicles to exercise influence in the human world. This (presumed) nearness of ancestors and God during times of trouble could explain why the Zimbabwean nationalists came up with the *mvana werhu/umtwana welilabati* (son of the soil), and the idea that the bones of the dead had arisen, (Mudzengi 2008,

Ranger 2004a cited in Fontein 2006, Kriger 1992) concept during the Chimurenga war of liberation from colonialism mentioned in the introduction. This explains why hauntology better portrays the shifts or the movements of entities back and forth connecting places, spaces, temporalities and entities, and the ways in which they sometimes manifest in different forms. With all this it is necessary to return to key issues in this chapter.

### **A Return to Some Key Issues**

The cases explored showed that in *ukama* it is not merely connections that matter but also the substantive entities often matter more as underscored by the accounts of pain and suffering. The *ukama* involves a careful balancing between the interests of individual substantive ontologies of the villagers and the *ukama* between the villagers. In *ukama* the individuals' own subjectivities and personal experiences of violence are not marginalised or neglected. In fact in *chivanhu*, there are proverbs such as *chida moyo hamba yakada makwati* (one should do what one's heart wants) and *ngoma inorira ichiti kwangu kwangu* (individuals always try to praise themselves); such proverbs emphasise the place of individual subjectivities and personal choices even though *chivanhu* also underscores *ukama*. In *ukama* therefore, careful balance is often negotiated in weighing where and when connections are more important and when substantive beings assume primacy over connections. As indicated in some of the cases some connections are regarded as undesired and subject to exorcism. *Ukama* shows that the interdependence that human beings have is multifaceted: there is material/economic interdependency between human beings for example which is satisfied when *hama* share material aspects. But *ukama* also implies physical, linguistic, spatial, marital, temporal, emotional and *mbepo/mweya* connections all of which though delineated range from the immediate to the distant, the visible to the invisible. Though in *ukama* there are such connections there are no presumptions of flatness that is presupposed in some theories that assume the absence of hierarchies and rhizomatic structures (Latour 2005, 2006). As underscored in the cases and evident in the organisation of village and family life there were hierarchies including chiefs, headmen, village heads, family heads and so on who were expected to play roles in abating violence. Nor were there presumptions of absence of rights and duties in *ukama*, though life could be understood in terms of

such ethics and morality as underscored above, villagers also made recourse to rights and duties, even if attenuated, as indicated by their recourse to the police. And in *chivanbu* life is also regulated through rules and customs such as those that pertain to marriage, incest and etiquette.

Though the vernacular adage that: “*ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*” (*ukama* is half empty, it has to be filled up by feeding) was applied, as note above, to encourage people with food and other material supplies to help others, the recipients of various forms of assistance were also encouraged to express gratitude as ways of generating and sustaining connections. It is to this aspect of *kutenda* (to thank) that I turn in the next chapter.



## On Economies of *Kutenda*

### Agency, Action and Surviving Economic Hardships

While taking a rest at the village shopping centre on 31 May 2011 I met Sod an old man, of about seventy years, who was cycling from one of the secondary schools in the district. He was also taking a rest apparently tired of cycling along the rugged and sandy village paths. After exchanging greetings Sod bought a cool drink and then sat on the veranda of the shop with me. Although the month of May in Zimbabwe often marks the end of summer and the beginning of winter, Sod had already run out of the staple maize meal. He pointed out that on account of insufficient rains he had only harvested a five litre worth of maize grain that season and so he was once again struggling to survive starvation. That day he had just cycled to a school where his son was employed as a teacher in order to seek his son's assistance. He noted that he expected NGOs to intervene again but very quickly in order to avert the starvation of the previous years.

As if to support himself physically before recounting the story of the previous years, Sod shifted his position and leaned on the shop wall. He then noted that he survived along with other villagers, on *bacha* (*paricapensis*). He and other villagers would walk over about twenty kilometres up to Nyazvidzi River where there were farms with many *mibacha* trees. *Mibacha* trees close to the villages were claimed by other villagers and so competition for the fruits close to the villages was very stiff. So Sod would wake up at one o'clock in the morning and walk to Nyazvidzi. In order to help carry the fruits, he always drove his donkey with him and on arrival he would wait for the ripe fruits to fall off the trees. He used the fruits to make thick porridge so that his family could eat, but other villagers used the fruits to brew beer which they sold. Though the villagers had many other fruits like *mazhanje/napaca kirkiana*, *bute/syzygium cordatum*, *maonde/sycamarius*, the fruits were seasonal so when they were about to go out of season the chiefs petitioned NGOs to assist. The NGOs

donated one bucket of maize grain per family per month and so for Sod, he had to supplement the maize meal with wild fruits for some time.

Sod stated that his sons in the capital city of Harare could not remit anything because they were also facing challenges including absence of basic commodities, acute cash shortages and hyperinflation. Before he resumed cycling to his home Sod remarked: *“Mwari vakagona kuita kuti michero yacho ibereke maningi nguva iyoyo. Zvimwe taive takanganisira Mwari saka mvura isina kunaya zvinhu zvikaoma”* (God did us a great favour by ensuring that the trees fruited a lot those years. May be we had wronged God that is why it did not rain such that the crops wilted).

Like many of the villagers I subsequently interviewed, Sod accounted for economic matters not merely in terms of living human beings’ interventions but also in terms of the interventions of *Mwari* who was deemed to have accounted for abundance of fruits as well as for the droughts. Such conceptualisations suggest that for Sod the economy is not merely a secular human realm as opined in some economic theories since the eighteenth century (Schabas 2005). While some economic theorists maintained that the economy was a distinct entity and subject not to natural processes but to the operations of human laws and agency, other thinkers held that nature was wise, just and benevolent in ways that made wealth a gift of nature. The nature deified and viewed in animistic ways since the eighteenth century was used as a polite word for God in the invisible hand of Adam Smith (Evensky 2005, Schabas 2003): it was assumed to have a purpose and to be teleological, which purpose was human welfare. Though this teleological view of nature came to underpin the idea of the invisible hand, considered by Adam Smith to be the hand of the deity Jupiter, in economics and moral philosophy these views appear to connect and separate from the cosmologies and metaphysics in other parts of the world including Zimbabwe. The presumption that nature was God underpins notions of animism and relational ontologies with which I grapple in this thesis.

Though inhabitants of Zimbabwe sent delegates to visit the *Mwari* shrine in the Matopo Hills in times of want (McGonagle 2007, Bullock 1927, 1950, Gelfand 1956, 1967), they did not consider the hills and other features of the environment to be God. In spite of some connections between God and the spirit world to features of the landscapes, the Shona (Fontein 2006: 58) do not consider God and ancestors to turn into



place. Thus in contrast to the Eighteenth Century deism, mentioned above, where nature was viewed as God, the spirit world and *Mwari* manifest in some parts of landscape, through rocks, caves, pools and trees, animals, birds and people without conflating themselves with the features or mediums that they use as their vehicles. Instead of conceiving wealth and welfare as emanating from objects of nature as implied in the teleology of Adam Smith for instance, inhabitants of Zimbabwe were reported to view welfare as emanating from *Mwari/Nyadenga* and for some also from the ancestors (see for instance Bourdillon 1976, Gelfand 1966, 1967: 20-21, Bullock 1927: 124-5).

Much like in the market economies where the invisible hands of the market forces are deemed to regulate prices and availability of items, often in ways that appear miraculous (see for instance Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Sanders 2003), accounts of the inhabitants of Zimbabwe show ways in which *mweya* (conventionally understood as “spirits”) and God were considered to provide for human welfare sometimes in miraculous ways. Though the food items could have been left by other supplicants under trees as well as in other places (see for instance McGonagle 2007, Gelfand 1966), worshippers/petitioners to shrines such as the Matopo Hills were deemed to be miraculously provided with food which they suddenly saw, “warm from a mysterious fire and ready for consumption upon opening their eyes” (see also Mutsware 1983, Gelfand 1967: 21, Bullock 1927: 124-5, Gelfand 1966).

Sharing connections with what Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) call millennial capitalism in which for instance finance capital manifests its spectral enchantments, its modes of speculation based on less than rational connections between means and ends (in the stock exchange, insurance, gambling), such modes of survival as among the inhabitants underscore openness of economies as well as the import of spectral presences. Because, for some scholars, economies in other parts of Africa are viewed as based on the “cosmic processes” (Kassam 1994), such economies challenge the conventional renditions of the world in terms of linear time and in terms of the contemporary classifications of the world in terms of levels of development. Even though the conceptions of more worlds besides the human world are considered to exist in connection with Africa (Fardon 1990, Bernard 2003, 2007, Mawere and Wilson 1995, Bullock 1950, Devisch 2001), such conceptions have not been taken into cognisance in formal and conventional classifications of the worlds. In

a context where in everyday life, worlds such as those of the *njuzu* underworld and the *Nyikadzimu* of ancestors, also referred by some church members in the villages as *Goredema*, are deemed to exist (see also Fardon 1990, Bullock 1950, Burbridge 1924, 1925, Mawere and Wilson 1995, Mudege 2008: 94-95, Bernard 2003, Isichei 2002, McGregor 2003), the classification of worlds for instance into developing and developed worlds (see for instance Escobar 1995, Sachs 1997) appears to oversimplify the complexity of the geographies of everyday life.

Everyday life geography thus simplified was translated into categories of first world, second world, third world countries in development parlance (see Escobar 1995) and as instruments of control over the social and physical realities of Asia, Africa and Latin America such notions of development precluded other ways of seeing and doing economies (Escobar 1992, Gibson-Graham 2004, 2005). Though such modes of colonising space and time through discourses of development premised on a priori categorisations of space and temporal linearity have persisted, the development that they were deemed to fruit has barely materialised precipitating an impasse in development theory (Schoorman 1993). In spite of attempts to tinker with economic rationalisations through structural adjustment programmes, economic woes have worsened (Bond 2005, Mkandawire 1995, Dashwood 2003, Stiglitz 2002, Bello 2004, Gibbon 1995, Amin 2011).

While rationality is often deemed to mark formal economic conceptualisations, the empirical realities of economic policies in everyday life do not seem as rational as the vicissitudes of the market sometimes play havoc on the quotidian domains making markets seem irrational (Amin 2011) and such economics have attracted demonstrations by the underprivileged on a world scale (Bello 2004). Though such secular economics replaced the Christian morality of Medieval period to which it was subordinate (Wilk and Cliggett 2007), the enthronement of the “Goddess of Reason” in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris during the French Revolution meant that the rebellion was itself also expressed in religious frames and so religion continued albeit in a different form (Byrne 1996: 6). Although modernity has been understood to have championed autonomy and rationality thus replacing religion (Coleman et al 2009: 6, Farmer 2010, Maynes et al 2008), such views about autonomy have been argued to be illusions as the modern subjects are considered to be disciplined in unprecedented ways even as they begin to proclaim autonomy (Maynes et al 2008).

Envisaged and experienced locally in Africa not as revealing but as concealing the powers that “animate” their world, such modern economies are hardly regarded as rational, clear or comprehensible as they are moved by unseen powers much like in witchcraft (Sanders 2003).

Much like in matters of witchcraft, people visited by economic crises often visit shamans (Kendall 2003). And much like in matters of witchcraft, neoliberal economics has been construed as an invitation for individuals to sacrifice their humanity and the humanity of others even if such sacrifices bring about greater disappointment and an acute need to revisit the past (Nyamnjoh 2004). But in the context of what other scholars have called “animal spirits” in reference to money illusions of nominal wages, loss of confidence or overconfidence in the economy resulting in irrationalities (Akerlof and Shiller 2009), the modern market economies have barely surpassed the irrationalities of their past. In the light of reports about sudden spirit attacks on workers in Multinational Corporations who explode into demonic screams and rage on the shop floor (Ong 1988), the supposed past of rational economies appears not to have residence in the past but in the present. In the light of the existence of acutely food insecure people even where there is plenty of food availability to go round (Christopher and Maxwell 2005), economies have hardly gone beyond the want of the supposed past. The supposedly rational market forces continue to create famine making those unable to obtain food through the market prove vulnerable to starvation (Keen 2008, Watts 1991) of which vulnerabilities have been understood in terms of structural violence of institution that legitimate inequalities (Farmer 2005).

But for others it is not just the failure to operate in accordance with market forces that accounts for suffering but rather the demons of poverty often embodied without consciousness of such embodiment (Meyer 1998). While for some it is participation in family and community rituals of possession, of rain, of first fruits ceremonies, or in sessions of divination or beer parties that invokes the demons of poverty (Maxwell 2006), for others, writing about different places in the world, it is failure to perform rituals to thank “spirits” considered to help the living that accounts for poverty (Baker 2008, Colson 1971, Ncube 2004, Mudege 2008, Gelfand 1956, 1970, McGonagle 2007, Verdery 1999). Thus while the *midzimu* were considered responsible for the nation’s prosperity, tranquillity and fertility, and feiras during the early period of contact were

preceded by libations and offering of cloths of which obligations the Portuguese with whom Africans had contact did not want (Bhila 1982: 75), the shift to “secular market forces” has not alleviated the problems of inequality and want as markets have entailed hidden fists (Bello 2004, Stiglitz 2002, Watts 1991). Though for some offerings, placed under trees, to ancestors could be enjoyed even by passersby who after eating also had to thank ancestors and ask for plenty (McGonagle 2007), for others blessings were deliberately and explicitly detached from the distributive economy based on kinship particularly if one’s kin were not born again Christians (Marshall 2009).

Stressing individual talent rather than blessings from ancestors as well as from others including those who are not church members (Maxwell 2006), some church members have tended to emphasise personal agency. Yet this, in Mamdani’s (1996) terms, apparently “poststructuralist position emphasising agency” diminished the significance of “historical constrain in the name of salvaging agency, making agency appear as lacking historical specificity”. Thus while conceptualisations of blessings in terms of ancestors and God appear to straight jacket agency within the iron laws of history, conceiving wellbeing in terms of individual talent effaces historical contexts of dependency on others for instance prior to the realisation of the talents. Emphasising individual talent occludes the contributions of others in the historical emergence of talent. And it ignores the debts of the past some of which are deemed to keep returning to cause havoc in the form of *ngozzi*, that is, the aggrieved dead who were not paid as servants, who were murdered or cruelly treated during their lifetime (Gelfand 1970, 1967, Mudege 2008, Fontein 2010).

Thus while missionaries sought to efface such practices preaching about the devil and the possibility of possession by evil “spirits” (Colson 1971: 234), such manifestations of the dead in the form of *ngozzi* demanding compensation are also interpretable as cases of the wronged persons demanding compensation, rather than merely evil spirits. Though ancestors, as distinguishable from *ngozzi*, were misinterpreted by missionaries as “evil spirits” distracting men from God, some in Zimbabwe were convinced of their effectiveness. Though sermons were preached that those who offered to the ancestors would go to Hell and burn forever, this clashed with the general conviction that such inhabitants would become ancestors themselves and receive their offerings in their turn. Aspirations to live in the *Nyikadzimu* (world of ancestors)

with relatives after death (Mudege 2008) explained the persistence of rituals as much as the aspirations to be in foreign territories explain rituals attendant to logics of border crossing (McGonagle 2007). Deemed to be benevolent, to be richer and to live in invisible worlds that parallel human worlds (Westerlund 2006, Fardon 1990, Devisch 2001, Bernard 2003, 2007), ancestors have been also counted as part of the Shona individual families (Gelfand 1956: 41). The fact that beer was brewed for *bira* ceremonies of thanks giving to ancestors and the fact that *bira* were conducted to celebrate the coming home of migrant labourers (McGonagle 2007) underscore multiple borders that have to be navigated in everyday life (West and Luedke 2006, Rutherford 2008). Such commerce, as I would conceive it, between the world of ancestors and the world of living human beings has been noted as significant in ensuring the well being of human beings. Writing about Madagascar for instance, Verdery (1999: 43) has noted that ancestors are made by remembering them, remembering creates a difference between the deadliness of corpses and the fruitfulness of ancestors. The ancestors respond by blessing their descendants with fertility and prosperity. For Verdery, the living must keep feeding their dead kin so as to ensure the ancestors' blessing and continued goodwill both of which are essential for the wellbeing of the "universe".

While some have emphasised the crossing of national borders by migrants who subsequently send remittances back home (Maphosa 2009, Bracking 2003, Bracking and Sachikonye 2005) and by cross-border traders (Muzvidziwa 2005), others have highlighted healers' ways of maintaining and crossing "cosmic" borders as well as terrestrial borders (West and Luedke 2006, Bernard 2003, 2007, McGregor 2003). But others have not merely looked at ways in which borders whether "cosmic" or terrestrial open out but often close off as citizens struggle to control resources and as immigrants are met with xenophobic violence as well as zombihood in foreign workplaces where they are exploited as slave labour (Nyamnjoh 2005, 2006, 2007, Isichei 2002).

Although issues of openness and freeing the economies from state control have been pursued often with disastrous consequences for human welfare (Mkandawire 1995, Bond 2005, Stiglitz 2002, Dashwood 2003), little has been done to interrogate notions of openness and freeing economies in terms also of popular epistemologies including the everyday life ideas of geographies and worlds. In spite of the fact that in Africa

there is informal governance by international institutions which have intensified the loss of sovereignty by African states (Mkandawire 1995, see also Stiglitz 2002), other invisible entities conceived in popular epistemologies to govern economies have been sidelined often on summary condemnation that they are forms of witchcraft and sorcery (Jeater 2007, Devisch 2006, Kapferer 2006). If the invisible hand of the market works with a hidden fist (Bello 2004) and if the international institutions pressure the rest of the world to accept their programmes and conditionalities even if they generate more poverty by so doing (Dashwood 2003, Stiglitz 2002), capital and modernity assume the role of apparatuses of capture stifling local diversity and alternative ways of doing economies (Escobar 2008).

Such conceptualisations of economies based on the market that is deemed to provide procedural equality of opportunity for competitive individuals and on the other hand on ideas of “spirits” deemed to provide and deny opportunities to individuals and groups (see for instance Bhila 1982, Schmidt 1997, Vuihuizen 1997) provide different versions (but with similar logics) of the world in everyday life. Through the vernacular concept of *kutenda* (to thank), this chapter focuses on villagers understandings of the economy as governed not merely by human institutions but by entities such as *mbondoro*, for which libations are paid, rendering it less amenable to control by human beings. It is in this sense more open economies that are surfaced which open economies are inclined to semi-autonomy rather than the conventional autonomous individuals.

Conceptualisations of other entities as controlling and governing the economies poses questions about agency as much as they do about openness of economies. While as hinted above, Adam Smith regarded nature in terms of an active “deity” with a purpose in teleological terms to advance human welfare (Schabas 2003, 2005, Evensky 2005), scholars in other contexts such as Africa and Zimbabwe (Opoku 1978, Rattray 1927, 1969, Bullock 1927, 1950, Fontein 2006), underscore that it is not objects of nature themselves that are deemed to have the agency but rather the “spiritual” entities abiding in or attaching to some of the objects. Writing about the Shona of Zimbabwe for instance, Fontein (2006: 88) notes that the “spirit” world (ancestors, *Mwari* and other “spirits”) does manifest itself in the landscape through rocks, caves, pools, trees, and also through animals and people that become vehicles for communication between the parallel existences or worlds of the people and spirits particularly on those ritual and sacred occasions when these worlds do

share temporal and spatial dimensions. Equally, writing from the context of west Africa, Opoku (1978: 4) argues that although fetishism (from Portuguese *fetico* referring to any work of art) was latter used as a synonym for religion in Africa with the implication that such religions amounted to nothing more than the worship of charms, such a term as fetishism is wrong to apply to Africa. His argument is that religions in Africa mean more than the word fetish implies as there is a clear distinction made in African languages between man made religious objects and “spiritual” beings or “deities”. So while other scholars have written about fetishism in which many objects (such as commodities, talismans, amulets and money) come to assume power over human beings (see for instance Taussig 1986, Miller 2005, Devisch 2006, Kapferer 2006), other scholars on Zimbabwe such as Engelke (2007) have noted that objects such as pebbles used in prayers convey “spiritual” blessings to enhance the chances of the jobless, looking for jobs, and of those who have lost jobs. So while some would discern the agency of the stones or objects themselves (see for instance Latour 2005), others would notice the deferred agency of human beings who infuse the objects such as the pebbles with desired forces/energies (see for instance Gell cited in Miller 2005). For Gell the primary reference point is to people and their intentionality behind the world of artefacts. In this sense the creative products of a person or people become their distributed minds that turn their agency into their effects as influences upon the minds of others. Though some perceive human social agency in the objects, others perceive spiritual energies of the dead human beings that are mobilised in the rituals and during the making of the objects. While some like Latour (2005, 2006) discern absence of hierarchies, others writing on Africa have discerned presence of hierarchies including in “spiritual” terms where the High/Supreme God is worshipped (Opoku 1978, McGonagle 2007, Gelfand 1956, Rattray 1927, Aschwanden 1987, Bullock 1950, Bourdillon 1976) as well as where the market is deemed by others to be worth sacrificing for such as within the (neo) liberal economies. Although neoliberal economies have been vaunted as open and free economies, other scholars perceived them as mechanism in which some countries were pressured to eliminate trade barriers while other countries kept up their barriers resulting in inequalities and increased poverty levels despite the repeated promise to reduce poverty (Stiglitz 2002, Watts 1991). In so far as the markets themselves are deemed to be controlled by some, who for instance set the prices, but not others they have been noted as lacking in openness but rather

as operating through the hidden fists, mentioned above, of those who control such markets (Bello 2004). In this sense, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have been noted as controlled by westerners whose views differ from those of the poor in developing countries where they exercise influence without having been elected and therefore without having constituencies (Stiglitz 2002). For this reason some scholars have noted that the accelerated flows of capital, goods, electronic information and migration induced by globalisation have only exacerbated insecurities, uncertainties and anxieties bringing about an obsession with citizenship, belonging, the building and reactivation of boundaries as manifested in xenophobia and other intolerances (Nyamnjoh 2005, 2006, 2007).

It is in the context of the debates about agency, openness, freedom in the market and broader economies that this chapter looks at ways in which villagers' survived material want. It is through the practice of *kutenda* (to thank) that the economies of the villagers can be understood as open and expressing interconnectedness not only between the visible realms but also between the visible and the invisible, the near and the far. In this sense the economies of *kutenda* underscore the existence of what other scholars have called conviviality (see for instance Nyamnjoh 2002) in which different or competing agentive forces are recognised as needing negotiated understanding in ways that empower individuals and groups alike not marginalising one for and by the other. As underscored in rituals of *kutenda*, conducted in *chivanhu*, where the living, the dead, some entities in the environment are all deemed to be connected (see for instance McGonagle 2007, Gelfand 1966), the kind of conviviality can be conceived as one where different worlds (of the dead and the living), different spaces and temporalities play out in simultaneity and synchrony. *Kutenda* in its reckoning of ancestors and *Mvari* is akin to ways in which some business people embrace spirituality treating others as brothers and sisters, and God as an invisible shareholder in the businesses (Gold 2004). Though other scholars have argued that ancestors are "demons", some scholars have noted some theologies such as the Catholic theology where Christian and nonChristian ancestors are deemed to be mediators between human beings and God provided they both obeyed natural law (Daneel 2007). Other scholars have noted that the early missionary Robert Moffat's use of ancestors to denote "demons" did violence to both Biblical and conventional Tswana usage.



For Comaroff and Comaroff denoting ancestors as “demons” reflects missionary ideology with long term effects on indigenous consciousness (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005: 550). While *kutenda* has aspects of exchanges linking groups of people such as noted by Levi-Strauss (1970) and Keane (1994), it is not merely about exchanges but also about ways in which those exchanges are motivated, enhanced and retained. Though *chivanhu* and the attendant *kutenda* are considered by other scholars in terms of the “traditional” practice of relying on the dead, other scholars have noted that even in the “modern” economies, there is also reliance on (the economic ideas of) dead scholars whose ideas outlive their originators and continue coming back (as neither dead nor alive or as undead zombies) (Paul Krugman 2009c cited in Quiggin 2010). The economy of *kutenda* is a kind of economy in which worlds much more complex and numerous are envisaged in everyday life in ways that expose the simplicity of conventional dichotomies between developed and developing worlds. It is possible to discern parallels between the simplistic dichotomies of developed and developing worlds, and the acrimony between the Zimbabwean state and western governments which served to worsen the country’s economic challenges.

### **A brief look at Zimbabwean economic challenges**

The economic challenges in Zimbabwe were aptly portrayed in the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor’s (Gono’s 2008) book entitled “Zimbabwe’s Casino Economy: Extraordinary Measures for Extraordinary Challenges”. In the book he expressed his worries that the Zimbabwean economy had become a casino economy in which some citizens were surviving on speculation rather than on productivity. He attributed the hyperinflation of 231 million percent, as of 2008, partly to the casino economy. Although the causes of the hyperinflation were not attributed only to lack of productivity but also to the invisible hands of the market, to money laundering, to profiteering including hoarding of commodities and to other aspects, the emphasis on productivity and the attendant efforts by the government to control the economy were particularly interesting for a number of reasons. Although productivity was emphasized, factories were closing down and relocating to other countries. As if this challenge was not enough the salaries that citizens earned particularly in formal sectors were eroded by the hyperinflation even before they were withdrawn from the banks. Although

productivity was emphasised, inputs and technology were unavailable, in states of disrepair or vandalized during the ongoing farm invasions which also disrupted work. In short the government's efforts to define and control things rendered the situation even more elusive.

The government sought to control prices of commodities and to control factories which efforts saw the flight of capital beyond the national borders resulting in formal unemployment levels reaching over ninety percent. The unemployment levels resulted in the proliferation of an informal sector over which the government had little control. The unemployment levels which were generated resulted in some citizens engaging in the speculation and money laundering over which the government had little control: the money laundering involved circulating money illegitimately acquired beyond the national borders and converting it back to the legal sector (Gono 2008). The government sought to restrict NGOs responsible for distributing food aid (Tarisayi 2009, Coltart 2008, Matyszak 2009), but then over four million of citizens were in desperate need of food aid which in the context of recurrent droughts could only be accessed beyond the nation state's borders. The 231 million percent hyperinflation resulted in massive shortages of cash, fuel and basic commodities which became more available on the informal market which could not be readily controlled by the government.

The crisis in Zimbabwe was characterized by a rapid decline of the economy, decline in production, hyperinflation, informalisation of labour, erosion of livelihoods (Raftopoulos 2009). The 2008 elections were held in an economy with over 80 percent population was living below the poverty datum line and 80 percent below the food datum line, International Crisis Group's May 2008 update says over four million people were in desperate need of food. Hyperinflation the central statistical office failed to release official inflation figures for February, March, April and May only to release the July figure that was 231 million percent. There were chronic shortages of foreign currency, fuel, electricity, water and basic commodities, unemployment levels in excess of 80 percent and the informalisation of the economy. In spite of the government's refusal to allow some humanitarian NGOs to operate, over 5, 1 million people in Zimbabwe needed food assistance between January and March 2009 (Tarisayi 2009). The ZANU PF government banned NGOs from distributing food in 2004 with President Mugabe saying that Zimbabweans did not want to choke on international food aid

which they did not need (Coltart 2008). On 4 June 2008 the Ministry responsible for social welfare issued a directive that all NGOs were to cease field operations with immediate effect alleging that humanitarian NGOs were distributing food on a partisan basis. The exchanges or lack thereof between the Zimbabwean government and European governments to which it was opposed have some parallels with events in the early colonial period. The refusal by the government of Zimbabwe to accept humanitarian assistance paralleled the refusal by inhabitants of what is now Zimbabwe to accept the first famine relief by the colonial government soon after colonisation because they alleged that the colonial troops had plundered and destroyed their grain during the first war that marked colonisation (see for instance Chigodora 1997). But during the crisis period in Zimbabwe, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor for instance was bitter about the fact that a German company, Giesecke and Devrient (G & D), that makes paper for printing money and from which Zimbabwe had been importing for 43 years had been ordered by the German government to stop exporting paper to Zimbabwe as part of sanction (Gono 2008). Further complicating this reason was the allegation that “neoimperialist were interfering in the country via NGOs allegedly purporting to be involved in humanitarian activities. But the ZANU PF party has also been noted as demanding party cards before distributing food relief (Matyszak 2009). In the context of the economic challenges, it is germane to consider ways in which villagers deployed their agency to survive.

### **Agency, Action and Openness of Everyday Life Economies**

In the context of the crisis briefed above villagers struggled to make ends meet. Mat, whom I interviewed on 5 June 2011 resigned from his job that could not guarantee his survival in 2008. He expressed bitterness about hyperinflation, shortages of cash and basic commodities. He was exasperated by the fact that he often walked twenty kilometres to the nearest bank to withdraw his salary yet after withdrawing it, the cash immediately became valueless due to the hyperinflation. He noted that in 2008 his entire salary could only buy a two kilogram packet of sugar. In his trips to the bank, he was unsure whether he would be able to withdraw his salary because banks often ran out of cash. But even when he managed to withdraw the cash he was unsure whether commodities would be available in the shops. Mat noted thus: “Because of the ever present

threats of starvation, teachers like me survived on wild fruits. One of the challenges we faced was that of acute cash shortages, the other was shortages of basic commodities like food, the third was political violence. All these problems contributed to the hunger and threats of starvation in the year 2008. Like in my case I did not have money because I often could not access it from the bank. I also did not have food, I did not even have clothes because my old clothes were torn and I could not buy new ones in the context of the challenges. Teachers like me sought assistance from villagers who were on donor lists: sometimes the villagers just gave us some food but other times they gave us pieces of work to do in exchange for the food. They assisted us with beans, cooking oil, maize grain and mealie meal”.

Like many other villagers, Mat’s exasperation was directed at the government which he considered to have unhinged the economy which was deemed to have been much better in the period prior to the onset of the crisis. Other villagers who were retrenched in the 1990s partly blamed the International Monetary Funds-imposed neoliberal economic reforms that were introduced in the 1990s and that entailed the retrenchments of the workforces, removal of price subsidies, deregulation of the market and opening up the economy to the world market of which vicissitudes they considered to have set the economic downturn. Some villager church members attributed want to afflictions by the dead manifesting as *mashave* that were considered to infect the living with poverty (see also Maxwell 2006, Marshall 2009). But, as will show below, other villagers like *mbuya* Noreen attributed the suffering partly to the neglect of rituals and to the privileging of individualism in some families which she understood to cause rivalries and competition within the families thus making it difficult for members to perform necessary rituals together.

*Mbuya* Noreen’s sentiments were exemplified by narratives about *ngozi* within some families which, because of lack of cohesion within them, found it difficult to collectively resolve the afflictions together through rituals. The *ngozi* was emanating from the *mweya/mhepo* of a deceased unpaid servant. It is important to note here that in *chivanhu* as noted by Noreen payment for services rendered is also a form of *kutenda*. The case of Nuh who walked about stark naked without bothering about the presence of other villagers close to her naked body was understood to be explicable in terms of *ngozi*. When I met her she was standing still by a village path early in the morning and she would not respond to greetings. By late afternoon when I returned

home from my interviews with other villagers I found her still naked and standing still by the village path; still she would not respond to greetings. Baffled I narrated my experiences to the villagers with whom I stayed who laughed and stated that it was Nuh a village woman who they said was afflicted by *ngozi* that would not let her look for employment or even get married. The story was that her paternal great-grandfathers once employed a male domestic servant from Malawi who they promised but failed to pay. When the servant died his *mweya* was noted as having returned as *ngozi* to demand that the debt is settled. But instead of paying up the debt, which they could not easily do because they neither had the resources nor did they know the family of the deceased servant, her great-grandfathers were advised by a healer to build a hut in the forest for the *mweya* of the deceased servant to stay without afflicting the living. This way of resolving the affliction by the *ngozi* worked for some time but when the great grandfathers died little was known within the family, which also lost cohesion, about how to maintain the hut and pacify the *mweya* of the servant which was then deemed to have taken over the faculties of Nuh.

A *ngozi* that is deemed to be arising from unpaid debts (see also Gelfand 1967, 1970) like in Nuh's case also poses complications to notions of agency. It speaks to constraints on ideas of autonomy due to the fact that individuals or families failed to materially *kutenda* their servants. In other words, a *ngozi* of such a kind can be understood as punishment by the deceased for failure to thank, in a material sense, the servants. In contexts, such as among the villagers, where family and individual histories matter in struggles for survival, agency is best understood not merely in terms of the emergence or pre-eminence of the individual but in terms of historical contexts and embeddedness deemed to enable or disable the agency. By explaining their troubles in terms of the failures of the government to manage the economy, in terms of the disastrous structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund and in terms of afflictions by the dead as well as in terms of neglect of performance of rituals, villagers can be understood to be underlining such historicity of agency and action in so far as it impinged upon their contemporary contexts.

The significance of contexts was underscored by Mari for instance who remarked to me during an interview thus: "My son, the money we had in Zimbabwe prior to the introduction of bearer cheques in the 2000s was valuable. Do you know the Z\$10, 00 which was red in colour? That one had value. The bearer

cheques which the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe printed during the recent years were really newspapers, worthless newspapers. But now this money (referring to American Dollars being used in multicurrency Zimbabwe since the 2009 Government of National Unity) from Obama has value so you can easily buy the commodities that you want. The only problem is that it is not ours. I went to my bank several times during the crisis but I was told that the bank had run out of cash. I survived through cross border trading, selling ground nuts in Botswana. I am also lucky because my brother-in-law who is in Australia sent me US\$100, 00 using money gram: then he would phone me so that I collected the money in either the town of Harare or Mutare”.

Further stressing the economic challenges, Mari stated thus: “*Madhora emuno aive neuremu kusiyana nemapepa akazoyiswa na Gono aingonzi nhasi adhindwa mangwana a expire, fume abviswa mamwe mazero. Panguva yaGono ndaiti ndaendesa chibage ku GMB mari yaiuya ndayaura apa inenge isisatengi kana two kilograms dzesugar. Mabearer cheque aingoita dutu izvo hapana zviripo nokuti chikoko chemachisa chainge choita two billion zvisingarevi chinbu*” (The Zimbabwean dollars initially had value unlike the mere papers that Gono (RBZ governor) introduced which papers (notes) were printed day in day out and expired as soon as they were printed necessitating the frequent striking off of some zeros on the notes as a way of revaluing them. During Gono’s time, I sold maize grain to the Grain Marketing Board but I always got my cash late when it had become valueless such that it could not even buy a two kilogram pack of sugar. The bearer cheques that Gono introduced would appear in the form of heaps of bank notes but they were useless notes because then a box of matches cost two billion Zimbabwean dollars).

I will cite here two cases that showed the ways in which other villagers struggled to survive in the context of the shortages of cash, commodities, and formal employment. One of the villagers that struggled to survive was Sende. Sende who I interviewed on 30 May 2011 said, “In 2007 I was dismissed from work because the company I worked for was relocating to Mozambique. Since then I stayed in this rural village but then there were droughts so I realized that my family was in trouble and could starve. I requested my young brother in the city of Harare to sell my bicycle which I had left in the city so that we could get money to buy maize grain. I borrowed money for bus fare to Harare but it was eroded by inflation before I used it. My wife

advised that we could borrow some more and I would return the money on my return from Harare. We borrowed some Z\$10, 00 more and I was eventually able to travel to Harare. When I arrived in Harare I realized that my young brother had not managed to sell the bicycle because no one could buy it in a context where workers were allowed to withdraw only a maximum of Z\$500, 00 (sufficient to buy South African R50) from their bank accounts. There was an acute shortage of cash. I wondered what I could do since my family was without food back home. My family decided to sell our asbestos sheets and some of my clothes so that they could survive; they exchanged the items with maize grain. After some days, my young brother and I were informed that some farmers in Mt Darwin were exchanging cows with maize meal. One cow was for 12, 5 kg x 2 of maize meal. However when we arrived in Mt Darwin they wanted a cow for 24 kg x 2 of maize meal. On our way back to Harare we fortunately helped a villager with transport and because he had no money he promised to pay with a calf. He gave us the calf and we exchanged it with a bigger cow which we slaughtered so that we could carry the meat with us. Unfortunately our car had a fault so we spent days in Mt Darwin and during those days we dried the meat. I sent some of the meat back home and my family shared it. At one time during the crises my friends and I intended to go to Chiyadzwa but on the day in question we saw a bus that was overloaded with passengers some of whom informed us that we had better returned back home because there were police officers in Chiyadzwa who did not want villagers to mine for the diamonds, as we intended to do in that area. We subsequently tried again to go to Chiyadzwa and began walking at 1 am but the other friend with whom we intended to go informed us that the situation was still bad in Chiyadzwa so we did not proceed with the journey. But then we had walked a great distance already. We were also informed that in Chiyadzwa some miners were trapped in the mines and also that the fruitfulness of the mining activities depended on ones *rombo* (luck).”

The second case is that of Movha. I met Movha on 25 August 2011 and during the interview he said, “I went to Chiyadzwa with other villagers because we also wanted to mine diamonds there. We had syndicates with others who had experience in mining the diamonds in the area and so they knew which direction to take flight when things were bad with police in Chiyadzwa. The miners were beaten and some had dogs set on them. It required luck to get the diamonds because for instance people like me went to Chiyadzwa and stayed

there for two months but we did not get anything. I returned home when I realized I was failing to get diamonds. My friends and I carried food with us but it ran out without us getting anything. I did not call my family back home because there was danger in the bush (Chiyadzwa) so one does not have to inform one's family. Because of the economic crisis which accounted for shortages of fuel, I also used to walk to Murambinda which is twenty kilometres away to withdraw my salary. I eventually gave up withdrawing the salary because the earnings were eroded by inflation even before I withdrew them. I abandoned my job at the village school and decided to go to my home village which is five kilometres away. I have stayed in my village from May 2008. At home, in my village, I grew vegetables and tomatoes which I sold to schools and to other villagers. I am still growing the vegetables and tomatoes. I pick a bucketful of tomatoes daily. In Chiyadzwa where I used to go, some people could be digging very close to me and they would get the diamond but, like I said, I failed to get even a piece. Other individual miners paid the soldiers that were guarding the place so that they could be allowed to get in and dig. They subsequently shared the proceeds. Food was very expensive in Chiyadzwa because the presence of diamonds pushed the prices up. I did not call my family when I went to Chiyadzwa. *Pachivanhu zvinonzi usataure uchienda kusango*” (in *Chivanhu* it is said that one should not tell one's family when one is going to the bush because they could immediately begin to grieve of the dangers).” He requested me to ask his wife, who was then preparing breakfast, to tell me how he appeared when he returned from Chiyadzwa, he could not describe it further himself. His wife simply said ‘now it is better because the currency has value. So he will not go to Chiyadzwa anymore’.

In the context of the challenges, villagers survived partly by receiving donations from Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) one of which sessions I attended in February 2011. Having read in the newspapers and in literature that the Zimbabwean government had proscribed some NGOs from distributing humanitarian assistance, I was keen to observe the villagers' reactions to the donations. The NGOs were accused by the government of being biased, of supporting and preferring members of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party which was, together with the NGOs, regarded as agents of “western neoimperialists”.



Keen to understand the villagers' own attitudes and views toward NGOs and the work which they did in the villages, I decided to attend the session for the disbursement of food handouts. So at about 10 am of the 28th of February 2011, I joined the other villagers who had gathered at Dananai where an NGO was set to distribute food handouts to the villagers. Amid exhilaration and singing thus: *ndiyani waronga kudai, ndiMwari wakanaka, ndiyani waronga kudai ndiMwari wakanaka* x 5 (who has planned this, it is the good God, who has planned this, it is the good God x 5), villagers' names were called out. Each villager who was on the list of beneficiaries received ten kilograms of rice, five litres of cooking oil and a bag of mealie meal for porridge. And for all these donations the villagers expressed gratitude through the singing and dancing.

The scene during the food distribution underscored how the villages were connected to other places in the world. The shopping centre was a hive of activity with the villagers streaming in to receive their donations and walking off with what they had received. The NGO staffs, that had their offices in the regional town of Mutare which is about 300 kilometres away from the villages, was busy loading and unloading food stuff and dolling out the donations. Indicating ways in which different people and places in the world were connected to the villages, the tents in which the food was distributed were inscribed WFP (World Food Program). The containers of the cooking oil were inscribed USA and on the mealie meal sacks was written Algeria Solidarity. On the NGO's vehicles was written Africare, which managed the donations on behalf of WFP.

In spite of the benefits of such food handouts, villagers' narratives of such sessions also underscored conflicts among themselves. NGOs had specified criteria of beneficiaries that often excluded some villagers. Village heads who compiled some lists of beneficiaries for submission to NGOs also had their own criteria and they were alleged by some villagers to exclude their political rivals from the lists of beneficiaries. Other villagers such as Mod and Manki who I met just before the food handouts accused the beneficiaries of laziness pointing out that NGOs' donations accounted for laziness among some villagers who had become accustomed to receiving handouts. Mod and Manki were not part of the beneficiaries as the donations were for villagers infected and afflicted by HIV/AIDs.

Implied in the sessions and the narratives by the villagers is that agency or even action is interpreted in terms of motives and interests. The government's vilification of NGOs as agents of neoimperialism as well as

the villager beneficiaries' own gratitude underscored moral issues in interpreting action or agency. Such interpretations of action or agency in terms of moral questions not only import political issues into agency but they also explain why villagers for instance expressed their gratitude to the NGO staff but not to other apparatuses that were also used in the donations. While other scholars have sought to interpret the actions of human beings and other things symmetrically in terms of their being actants, the villagers' reaction during the donations indicated the pre-eminence of human beings. The reactions by the villagers appear to support Alfred Gell's (see Miller 2005) theory of natural anthropocentrism where our primary reference point is to people and their intentionality behind the world of artefacts, but among the villagers the reference points were also to *Mwari* (God) and *midzimu* (ancestors).

Such reference points were present in Try's accounts of his life. On 3 June 2011 I interviewed Try, a builder of about 39 years. Sometime in 2006 he was taken ill to the extent that he was unable to walk and had to be pushed to hospital in a wheelbarrow. "I was diagnosed with TB and AIDS and put on a free treatment course. Noting my diagnosis with AIDS and the criticalness of my condition, the NGO called Dananai added me to the lists of its beneficiaries so that I received porridge, beans, peas, maize grain, cooking oil, and mealie meal for porridge." *Ndakanga ndafa ini. Varungu kuvatuka zvedu asi vanetsitsi ndinovatenda. Dai vasiri ivo ndingadai ndakafa ini. Ndaitombotambura hangu kuvana mari yebhazi asi ndinotenda kuti mukoma wangu aindibatsira aiti akavana mari ondipavo. Muchiona kusimba kwandaita kudai ndavakuita basa rangu rekuvaka full-time. Ndakararama nenyasha dzuMwari. Ndinotenda Mwari vakatondigonera handisisina nhamo iye zvino handichapini chikafu hangu asi ndasimba zvekuti ndave kuzvishandira ndichidya* (Literally translated, "I was dead. We shout at the Europeans but they are philanthropic, I thank them. If it was not for them I would have died. I sometimes had problems getting bus fare to go to the hospital but I thank my brother who assisted me with some money. You see me strong now so I can do my own job as a builder. I survived thanks to God. I thank God who assisted me so that now I have not much troubles, I can do my own work and earn some money.")

Try's statements have three instances where he used or alludes to *kutenda* (thankfulness): in one instance he is thankful to the Europeans at the hospital who provided him with treatment for TB and AIDS and the food

donations, in another instance he is thankful to his brother who assisted him during the moment of illness, in yet another moment he is thankful to God whom he considered to have made it possible for him to survive.

Explaining ways in which inhabitants of Zimbabwe survived through *chivanhu*, that is, through *kutenda* ancestors and *Mwari*, *mbuya* Noreen remarked that: “*Vakuru vedu vaienda kuMabweadziva kunokumbira mvura kunaMwari uyo vaienda zve. Vaitenda zve. Vaitenda mifambo mirefu saka vaiti kana vonzwa nzara vaikumbira chikafu pasi pemichakata vopiwa sadza raingonyuka. Asi ikozvino chikafu hachibabudi nokuti vanhu vakasvibisa nzvimbo dzacho netsvina. Tave kutongorarama ne kupiwa chikafu nemaDonor. Vamwe vemumburi vapandukirana nekuda kwemari havachabatsirani kana kuita mabira*” (literally, our forefathers went to Mabweadziva (now conventionally called Matopo Hills) to request for rain from God. They walked long distances so when they were hungry they petitioned for food under *michakata* trees and *sadza* was provided by God who they thanked. Now even if one requests for such food it does not appear because people have defiled the places under such trees. We now have to simply survive on donors. Family members among some of us villagers have turned their backs on one another, they no longer assist one another and they do not even cooperate in ceremonies).

Conceiving *kutenda* rather differently from Try, *mbuya* Noreen had this to say when I met her on 5 November 2011: “*Mazuvano kukumbira sadza pasi pemuti hazvichaiti asi mumvura munonzwika ngoma kurira. Vakare vaive vakatendeseka, vaienda, vaikumbirira Zimbabwe yese kuMabweadziva uko kwaienda masvikiro. Vaimboenda nembeu kunouchikwa vodzoka vanhu vopiwa. Vaikumbira sadza pasi pemuti kana vonzwa nzara vopiwa rakatobikwa kwete zveMaNGO-itsitsi dzei kubhururuka nazvo kubva mbiri kwamakungwa ivo vakaviga mari paMvuma apa tavana independence-vakafutsira mari. Bulgar yemaNGO ini handidi ndinotokushira buku; ndinombozvibrunza kuti ndezvevanhu here kana mbuka izvi kana mishonga yavanorapisa vanhu handigutsikani nayo. Yavanoti AIDS sei iri yevatema-chikafu chavanotipa hachina kunaka dzimwe nguva chinodya muviri kwemakore woona zvonetsa.* (“These days petitioning for *sadza* under trees does not yield desired results though we still hear drums being beaten under the water of some pools. The forefathers were more faithful and thankful to *Mwari* and ancestors, they petitioned on behalf of the whole of Zimbabwe at the Mabweadziva Hills where mediums resorted to. They used to go there with seeds to be blessed before planting and on return they distributed the seeds to the rest of the inhabitants. They requested for *sadza* under trees when they felt hungry and they were given the *sadza* already

cooked unlike the NGOs-what empathy is this that they have to fly all the way from overseas when they refused to share the wealth of the country after independence. I do not even like the bulgar that NGOs donate, I give it to chickens: I sometimes ask myself if the food they donate is for human beings or for animals, even the medicines they use to treat people I am not satisfied with it. What they call AIDS why is it that it only afflicts the blacks, is it not because of the kind of food they donate to us which is not good may be the food destroys the body for years before one notices.”)

Though her misgivings about NGO donations have been similarly recorded in other places such as in Masvingo district (Gutu 2004: 57 cited in Masunugure et al 2007) where villagers considered food aid as inferior and to be livestock feed in countries of origin, she did not appear to dislike other countries as in fact her daughter was employed in Johannesburg by a Chinese businessman. Her dismay about the desecration on places under some trees where they petitioned for food can be interpreted as expression of disgust at the closure of worlds, in the absence of appropriate ritual performances, including the ancestral worlds which were understood to have facilitated survival struggles. While her account of food petitioning under the trees is supported by Gelfand (1967: 21), Mutswairo (1983), Bullock (1927: 24-5, 1950) other scholars have pointed out that villagers during their rituals often left food under such trees as *michakata* and passers by could eat the food and then thank ancestors who were deemed to have provided it (McGonagle 2007). Though other scholars underlined the suddenness of the appearance of the food, *mbuya* Noreen did not underscore such suddenness. So while Bullock (1927: 24-5) for instance noted that the priesthood of *Mwari* made a feature of a feast of viands and beer which appeared suddenly and were supposed to have been miraculously provided by the God, Noreen simply stated that food appeared after petitions were made during pilgrimages to Mabweadziva (now called Matopo Hills). Though Bullock (1927) stated that the worshippers or petitioners suddenly saw viands before them on bare rock, warm from some hidden fire, Noreen’s account did not stress any dramatic appearance of the food.

The remark by *mbuya* Noreen that nowadays food is not supplied by *Mwari* under trees because the places under them have been desecrated can also be understood in terms of the frustration villagers had with cashless banks. Possibilities of acting without getting connected to one’s desires underlay the frustration

noted with respect to failure by some villagers to access their salaries from banks which could not dispense cash during the crisis. As noted with respect to Mat, villagers deployed their action with aims which if they failed to achieve they registered frustration. The villagers' modes of engagements underlined the significance of goals in matters of struggles for survival and in this sense action is rendered in terms of goals and in terms of efforts to connect with others for some purposes. To the extent that villagers expressed frustration at their failures to access cash and to buy commodities which were not available in the shops during the crisis, they indicated the need to pay attention to such dispositions including the personal anguish that attends privation as well as the jubilation that attends successful connection with desired ends. In this way the villagers' modes of engagement raise the issue of how one might conceive the action of human beings as symmetrical with the action of "nonhumans" as implied in the actor network approach (Latour 2005), without running the risk of ignoring or slighting the significance of feelings including the attendant frustrations and joys that are also crucial in understanding matters of survival.

The point here is not that villagers did not see the significance of other things that aided their survival but rather it is that struggles for survival are often matters of politics of survival in which what matters is not only action but also feelings and the possibilities of imputing blameworthiness for action and inaction. In moments of such politics it is often human beings that are blamed for action or inaction. The absence of cash for instance was blamed on bank officials as well as on government officials including on the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor: the absence was not blamed on the ATM machines which could not dispense the cash because officials had not loaded cash into them. Similarly the absence of commodities and the hyperinflation were blamed on government officials who in turn blamed the shop owners for profiteering: the commodities themselves were not blamed for disappearing. Even though money vanished in the banks due to hyperinflation, it was bank officials and the government officials who were blamed for it; it was not the money that was blamed for vanishing. For instance Fel whom I interviewed on 28 June 2011 pointed out that although in the 1990s she could afford to buy commodities because the currency was relatively stronger than the bearer cheques which the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor introduced in the 2000s rendered things unaffordable as for instance a loaf of bread cost Z\$10 billion in the recent past.

What the above modes of engagement suggest are perceptions that there are things such as ATMs which although they may be deemed in terms of the Actor-Network Theory to act for instance by dispensing cash they are not considered blameworthy and in such a scenario human beings look behind the machines to see human beings who attract the blame in the stead of the machines. The modes of engagements also suggest that human beings act and attract blame or praise. The third position is that of healers who as noted above considered the *mweya/mhepo*, which I will look at more closely below, to act and to attract blame as well as praise. Arguably these efforts to see causal individuals behind things do not speak very well to the assumptions of the actor network approach which presumes flatness and symmetry between humans and “nonhumans” because the efforts underline perceptions of hierarchy even among human beings themselves. The modes of engagement reflect hierarchies which, however faulty and often blameworthy, were a feature of the organization of everyday life in the villages as well as in the country. In view of such modes of engagement, it can be argued that the connections among the villagers were as much horizontal, in cases where villagers connected with their fellows, as they were vertical with respect to the hierarchies.

Even though agency explains the villagers’ modes of engagement including their connections with others, it can also be argued that in view of the privation, the frustration, the feelings of helplessness and the disablement of survival the villagers were more or less patients than agents in the connections. The lamentation by Mat for instance as noted above that even the village school teachers were reduced by the crisis to beggars for food underlines the pitfalls that are risked in perceiving the villagers, in the context of the crisis, merely as agents without also noting the ways in which they were rendered patients of their fellows from whom they begged for the food. In this sense the switches from being a school teacher earning a salary to begging from fellow villagers and to surviving on picking and gathering wild fruits can be understood as having been punctuated as much by agency as by moments of being patients of the context of want. In this sense the deployment of agency can be understood in terms of efforts to take flight from being patients but as seen with respect to the villagers the flights from becoming patients are not always guaranteed in context of crisis. It is the absence of such guarantees that often necessitate multipronged pursuits in everyday life struggles to survive. It is because one is not securely an agent that one petitions others, connects with others,

engages with others in a variety of ways that call for appraisals, reappraisals and feedback which in turn explain the endurance or otherwise of the connections. *Kutenda* (to thank) is one such way in which villagers offered appraisals and feedback on and about others with whom they were connected.

### ***Kutenda***

Popo who I met and interviewed on 4 August 2011 narrated his struggles to survive thus: “I started selling vegetables, potatoes and fruits in 2003. In 2008 I barter traded in cooking oil and soap. I bought the cooking oil from Mozambique and exchanged it with maize grain at the Grain Marketing Board, now I have managed to buy six cows. I have tried my hand at a number of things like gold panning switching over to informal trading again. Now I sell these clothes, batteries, shoes and oils. I did not go further than the General Certificate of Education “O” level because my father died in 1997 and since my two brothers were already at universities my mother decided to focus on them in her financial priorities. But now I am living well. I have learnt a lot from my experiences so much that even if you leave me to stay in a desert I will find means to survive. It is God who gives me the means to survive and I thank him for that, but sometimes as human beings we fail because of witches and *zvikwambo* (conventionally understood as goblins). *Zvikwambo zvinobata pfungwa dzewanhu asi vamwe vanokanganiswa nekudeketererwa. Zvikwambo zveluck zvinobira vamwe zvoshatirisa Mwari mvura yoramba kunaya. Tine maziso asi hationi zvemumbepo zvakaita sekubira kunoitwa pachishandiswa zvikwambo*” (*Zvikwambo* arrest the minds of people but some people are disabled because some people perform rituals to arrest the success of others. *Zvikwambo* for luck steal from others making God angry such that people are visited with droughts. We have eyes but we can not see things in the wind like the fact that *zvikwambo* steal from others).

Also noting the significance of *kutenda* partly with reference to *ngozi* which I hinted to above, *Mbuya* Noreen remarked that: “*Ngozi yakaoma, munhu baaurayive. Mbepo dzakagara dziriko kubva kare paive nevaya vaigarira kuti vapive vakadzvi vanhu vozoita ruchira vozvarira vana paneupfumi uya ziso rake rinonga richingova paakaradizwa. Anoorwa hake asi haaiti mvana odzoka pamusha ozoita zitete risingaroorwi kana rafa rodzoka vave vaviri. Mudzimu unoda kucheneswa, Bira rinoita kuti udzoke mumusha kana risati raitwa anonzi ari kumashizha. Mamwe mabira*

*ndeekutenda mudzimu. Bira ini ndichaita gore rinouya, gore rino handina mari. Panobikwa doro rebira uya akapondwa mutorwa anotopiwa yake hari inoiswa kunze kwemusha vanouya vatorwa vopfuura vachimwa. Vakuru vemisha vanototanga vapira kwaari kuti tinoziva kuti muri mumusha hari yenyu ndiye musakanganise zvedu. Iyezvino vanhu vave kuti ukarimwa zvinotorana newe, kunyepa anotorana newe sei usina kumuuraya?*"(Angozi poses difficulties; a person should not be killed. Winds of the dead have always been in existence in history there were people who worked as servants so that they would be given wives but because the promises were not kept. After their death the servants continued to look forward to the fulfilment of the promises so they seized women in the families concerned, the women could get married but fail to conceive and return to their natal homes to stay as unmarried aunts possessed by the deceased unpaid servants. As far as the ancestors are concerned they need to be cleansed through rituals so that they become purified from dirty spirits. The *bira* is done so that the ancestors can return home, if it is not done the deceased stays in the bush. Other *bira* are done simply to thank the ancestors. I will be conducting my own *bira* next year; this year I have no money. When beer is brewed for the ancestors' *bira*, the person who will have been murdered by family members has to be informed and given his/her own pot of beer which is placed outside the homestead so that passersby will drink the beer. This is a way of acknowledging the presence of the deceased strangers who may still be within the homestead. The elders of households have to first inform the murdered that they know he/she is in their homestead so he/she should not disturb their ceremonies. But nowadays people claim that if one drinks the beer for the murdered he/she will leap onto you, this is a lie, why would the murdered leap onto one who did not kill him/her?).

Mbuya Noreen's observations were replicated in Rora's notes to me on 30 January 2011. Rora, a *n'anga* by profession said, "when villagers do not *tenda* their ancestors, some get involved in accidents. Often for those who die, it is because they neglect *kutenda* in *chivanhu*; some villagers no longer perform *kurova guva* ceremonies for the deceased because they say they have joined churches. Beer for the *biras* to thank *mudzimu* is no longer brewed yet the *mudzimu* would have been assisting for instance in making one pass at school or university. There is need to brew beer to inform the *mudzimu* that you have passed. Even in marriages divorce rates have risen because villagers no longer compensate the *ngozi*, the some of the villagers have assumed *chirungu* so they



no longer perform all these ceremonies, so they no longer have the protective walls of the ancestors. *Bira* involves brewing beer to thank the senior ancestors and you tell them, villagers should drink the beer and dance like the ancestors used to do when alive. The wealth of some villagers vanishes because it is not connected to the *Nyikadzimu* of their ancestors. *Chivanhu hachife* (*chivanhu* does not die). The *Mashavi* (plural for homeless spirits of deceased individuals from outside particular families) exist, the *shavi* (singular) of poverty exist. The *shavi* of poverty is a *shavi* that some villagers deflect when they visit them to their *hama*. The *shavi* renders poverty in families. It shuttles between the different families in *ukama* and those who discover its existence consult *n'anga* requesting that he/she send it away and to other families in the *ukama*. The *n'anga* then go to the forest and call the name of the intended new victim of the *shavi* and then they tell the *shavi* to go to that new victim. The *shavi* goes and stays with that person or new victim, the *shavi* of poverty is not destroyed by churches. Churches only provide temporary solutions or respite for 5 to 10 years before the *shavi* resurfaces or returns again. Some *mashavi* are sent away after they have been requested to get lodged in fowls or in goats. Other *shavi* are left by victims, with the assistance of *n'anga*, at crossroads. Whoever is first to pass by the crossroads after that ceremony will be the *shavi's* new victim and will carry it back to his/her home. The *shavi* can be made, by the *n'anga*, to sit on a nice item and then the item is left at a crossroad or in a forest so that any person who picks up the thing will also pick up the *shavi* which will then begin to stay with the person in his/her home. If you remember the forefathers, they will also remember you and ensure that you do not get into trouble. These days many of the rich people in Zimbabwe are those without high education but who perform the *kutenda* ceremonies. Europeans have retained their memorial services but we have abandoned our *chivanhu*.

*Kutenda* can be understood as a way of reckoning connections of *ukama* with others. It is a way of acknowledging the impossibilities and difficulties of exercising agency or acting in the world all on one's own. It can be understood as a way of recognizing the import of others, as in Try's case, where one is more of a patient than an agent, that is, when one's agency is debilitated by ill health and other forms of want. In this way it is a way in which connections with others perceived to enhance life are acknowledged and fostered. *Kutenda* is considered among the villagers to be so important in maintaining connections of *ukama* such that

when one fails to *kutenda* it is remarked that “*kusatenda buroyi*” (to fail to thank the other is witchcraft). This can be understood to emphasize to individuals that they do not live merely by asserting autonomy and that they should recognize the import of others, who may feel harmed by failure to acknowledge them.

Such remarks linking failure to thank the others with whom one is connected to *uroyi* (witchcraft) suggest that failure to thank risks breaking connections that render life much in the same way *uroyi* is understood to break the flows of life. In other words connections can be conceived in terms of variants of insurance from which via petitions individuals reap benefits and conversely via *kutenda* they invest in the connections that render life. While such connections can be viewed in terms of Ingold’s (2011: 63) meshworks of entangled lines of life, in context of crisis connections can be understood as much in terms of life as with lifelessness and death. To privilege life may be to ignore moments when life is interrupted, and lost; it would be to miss moments when life and death cohabit or share the same spatial and temporal domains. Yet as indicated above even banks had moments during which they were punctuated by life as well as when they were deserted for absence of cash; shops equally had moments when they were punctuated by life as well as deserted for want of commodities and workplaces had moments when they were deserted for want of living wages in the hyperinflationary context. In view of such vicissitudes of the crisis and the unpredictability of life one can rather speak of moments of life, rather than lines of life for life during crisis is lived for the moment. And as seen in the ceremonies in honor of the dead who were petitioned and thanked by some villagers, life is often articulated with death and with the dead.

Such *kutenda* connections between the dead and the living, between life and death can be interpreted from one ceremony which I attended in 2011. When I met Don in January 2011 he indicated to me that he wanted to conduct a ceremony to thank (*kutenda*) his ancestors for the trading business he had established in Mozambique. I eagerly took it as an opportunity to participate in the ceremony and to learn how he conducted it. A few days later, I accompanied him to a healer who offered him advice on how to proceed with the ceremony. Following instructions from the healer, Don bought some *rapoko* grain and he put some in a small plate over which he uttered statements informing his ancestors about the oncoming ceremony. He then poured the *rapoko* back into the sack. I assisted him carry the sack which weighed about 20 kilograms to

a well where he soaked the *rapoko* for seven days, un-soaking it when it started sprouting. The *rapoko* was dried on a rock where it was spread for some days before it was taken to the grinding mill. From the grinding mill he secured a drum into which he poured water and mixed it with some maize meal and meal from the *rapoko*. After that he poured the mixture into some clay pots and left the mixtures to ferment overnight. In the following morning he put the mixture into a drum and boiled it until the drum was half empty. When the drum was half empty the mixture started smelling like home brewed beer. He left it to cool and then he put some more mealie meal from *rapoko* which he stirred and put aside to ferment overnight. The following morning we put the mixture into a sack and squeezed it so that the beer was smooth.

Immediately after the beer was processed, he sent word to the village head as well as to other villagers whom he could find to join him in the ceremony. They sat under the shade of one big tree which was not of ritual significance to the ceremony. Before he started issuing the beer, Don went into a hut and uttered statements informing his ancestors that the beer was ready for consumption. Don then carried the pots of beer to the shade. As the villagers drank the beer, stories including how other villagers had performed similar ceremonies, were shared until the evening. Much as the villagers mobilized one another for the ceremonies, they deemed the ceremonies to mobilize the invisible realms of their ancestors who were considered to aid the survival tactics of the villagers who performed such ceremonies. Among the villagers ancestors were considered to be dead but alive and active in the human realm and to remain embedded in *ukama* connections with the living whose welfare they were deemed to influence.

Don's ceremony can be understood in the context of the broader engagements by the villagers between the visible and the invisible realm in their efforts to survive. In his case he petitioned the invisible realm of his ancestors as well as individuals in the visible realm including the healer from whom he got advice, the other villagers whom he requested to participate in the ceremony and he understood his petitions to have import on his material survival. The result was complex connections understood to engender feedback on different levels. However among the villagers one notices some convergences as well as divergences premised on the different ways in which they deemed the invisible realm to be constituted.

Members of the many churches that dotted the villages conceived ancestors to lie in the same realm of the malevolent dead such as the aggrieved deceased that return as *ngozi*. So they bunch ancestors together with the *ngozi* as in the category of *mweya yakaipa* (literally translated, bad air) for which one needed exorcism. For this reason they dissociated themselves from family ceremonies aligned with ancestors so healers such as *mbuya* Noreen decried ways in which churches were understood to have pulled family members apart making the performance of ceremonies difficult. Her own son who had joined an apostolic sect withdrew from it when the leaders pressured him to abandon his mother for a surrogate mother within the church. The church leader argued that her son who had just joined the church had to sever connections with her because she was a healer.

But church members also relied not only on prayers but on *tsvimbo* (literally translated as knobkerries which are also used by healers) or rosaries which they carried on their necks. Timo who deserted his job at the height of the crisis always carried his *tsvimbo* on his neck. I met Timo of about 25 years old on 3 August 2011. He said he had worked in a mine in Gwanda up to 2008. He said thus: “I deserted employment when it was not helping me survive in 2008 and I came back to Buhera while on leave. Bank withdrawals were limited at that time to Z\$500, 00. I was ferried by a company car to Bulawayo and we (my wife and I) had all our belongings. I wanted to board a train from Bulawayo to Gweru but the train was already full. I did not have enough money for food and travel back home to Buhera. Fortunately I met my wife’s friend who worked at the take away restaurant by the train station. She gave us *sadzwa* (thick porridge) she also paid for our train tickets and made sure that our belongings were put on board the train. She also gave some money to my wife. *Akaita madhiri ake mukati akadzoka kwatiri* (she performed her tactics inside the railway offices and then came back to us). We arrived in Gweru but at that time I no longer had money enough for the journey from Gweru to Buhera. I went to CABS (Central African Building Society) to withdraw money. I presented my identity card as well as my bank card but because I was stressed I punched wrong numbers. My wife was in her first pregnancy and I had no money for my in-laws, for our food and for *kusungira* rituals (associated with marriage and first pregnancy) for my wife. I punched wrong numbers after which the bank teller asked whether I was alright. I informed her of my troubles. At that time withdrawals could only be done inside banks. I eventually

succeeded in punching the correct pin numbers. Buses did not want to ferry our belongings because I did not have enough money. A man who I met at the bus stop (he intimated that the man was a member of a church) asked me if I wanted to go home in Buhera and I said yes. He said, 'let me then assist you carry your luggage to the bus stop'. I cast my eyes to the bus stop and realized that a long distance truck which was due to Buhera was just leaving. Upon arrival at the bus stop a taxi driver declined to ferry us because of our luggage. In the middle of pondering how we would get home, a vehicle belonging to sisters of the Roman Catholic Church which was also bound for Chipinge was arriving and it stopped a distance away from where we were. I explained my troubles to the sisters and then they asked me where my *tsvimbo yevaRoma* (Rosary) was, I showed them the rosary which was around my neck. They then allowed me to board together with my wife and our baggage. We eventually arrived home in Buhera. My wife went straight home from the bus stop to inform our family that we had arrived. My brothers subsequently carried our baggage home. I cried as I could not believe that I had eventually arrived home. I have not yet returned to work. We stayed together, with my family, at home because some of them used to trouble me when I was working, they accused me that *hanna musoro* (you have no head/ you are not wise with your money) so when we were together in the village and without means I wanted to see who among them would accuse me of not using money wisely. I will not abandon my church, the Roman Catholic, because it helped me a lot. When we arrived at the shopping centre I showed the Catholic sisters the Buhera branch of our church as they were passing by on their way to Chipinge. I thank God and I also thank the sisters.

The ways in which invisible forces (some of which are subject of *kutenda* while others are subject of vilification) were deemed to impinge on everyday life can be exemplified by the case of Wita who I met in June 2011. Her story exemplified ways in which some invisible forces were subject to vilification rather than *kutenda* among the villagers. Her story also resembled many other stories that I was told by different individuals in the villages and in many ways the stories parallel Comaroff and Comaroff's (2001) account on millennial economies particularly as involving spectral presences and as not premised on productivity but on speculation. The accounts among the villagers were of *zvikwambo* (plural of *chikwambo*) which were understood to be made by sorcerers in order to harm others, to acquire wealth and to be feared by others. Wita who I

interviewed on 10 June 2011 pointed out thus: “*Chikwambo mweya wemunhu akafa wakaipa unobuda uri pazvinhu zvakaite semaruwa, kiti, chirume chipfupi kana mishonga chaiyo. Chikwambo chinotorwa kana kutengwa nechinangwa chekuda kubudirira muupenyu pazvinhu zvakasiyana zvinosanganisira kuda kupfuma kana kungoda kutyiwa munharaunda kana pabasa*” (a *chikwambo* is air of a deceased human being that is evil and that manifests in things such as flowers, cats, very short man or as herbs. It is acquired or bought with the aim of succeeding in life in a number of dimensions including riches, in order to be feared in the area or at workplaces).

Nau noted that she had miserable experiences with *chikwambo* that she alleged her husband acquired from a healer in South Africa with the aim of enhancing his luck during the crisis period. She further alleged that he was given the *chikwambo* in the form of a flower which he was told to feed with milk, by pouring it on the flower. The worries that led to her consulting healers arose from dreams which she frequently experienced, subsequent to her husband acquiring the *chikwambo*. In the dreams, which she noted as recurrent, a very short man had sexual intercourse with her every night. Without awareness that it was her husband who had acquired the *chikwambo* that was troubling her, she informed him about her dreams. Her husband merely shifted to another bedroom. Nau noted that she continued to experience the dreams every morning she woke up feeling very tired. She subsequently consulted a healer who she reported disclosed that her husband had acquired the *chikwambo* from a healer in South Africa and because the *chikwambo* needed a wife, it was taking her. Nau noted that she subsequently informed her husband about the healer’s allegation and her husband confirmed that he had acquired the *chikwambo* for purposes of enhancing his luck. He further alleged that when he shifted from his bedroom he was fleeing from the *chikwambo* which was beating him because it wanted Nau for a wife. Her husband died shortly after that and Nau consulted prophets who helped her remove the *chikwambo* by destroying the flower and the herb through which it manifested and by bidding its *mbepo/mweya* to depart from the homestead.

In interpreting such experiences there is a need to note the ways in which in such everyday life dreams are conceived to bridge the wakeful and sleep time as well as how verification of matters is done in contexts where the visible and the invisible realms are deemed to be articulated. In Nau’s case she sought to verify her dreams by consulting a healer and often in their verifications villagers consulted several healers and or

prophets in different areas. Also in Nau's case her dreams were verified by the fact that sometime during the moments when she was troubled by the *chikwambo* her daughter who she noted became a second victim started having similar dream and experiences which she shared including waking up feeling very tired. In these cases the visible is understood in terms of the invisible and vice versa.

But villagers such as Mai T did not consider the *zvikiwambo* to spread sexually transmitted diseases. She said that, "*chikwambo hachiparadziri zvirwere zvepabonde zvinosanganisira HIV / AIDS nekuti ini ndakatanga kuita zvekurota ndichisangana nemurume ndichiri musikana asi ndakangoorwa nemukomana wangu ndiri mbandara yakazara saka zvinoratidza kuti hapana physical contact asi ndezvepamweya chete. Hapana physical contact zvinonetsa kuti munhu awane umbowo hwakakwana. Vanotizve chikwambo hachionekei nemaiziso saka mapurisa anoda umbowo hunoonekwa uye kubatika, unongokuvarira mukati* (*chikwambo* does not spread sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS because in my case I started dreaming having sex with a man when I was still a young girl but when I was married I was still a virgin so there is no physical contact. There is no physical contact. It is difficult for a person to get full evidence of rape by *chikwambo*. They also say that *chikwambo* is not visible so the police want tangible evidence of rape, so we women just suffer in silence without anyone taking notice). Though some invisible forces manifesting as *mbepo/mweya* such as *ngozi* and *zvikiwambo* cause suffering in everyday life, it is necessary to draw distinctions between them and the world of *midzimu* that are considered by some to be benevolent. Don's experiences indicate that *midzimu* differ from *zvikiwambo* which as other scholars (Shoko 2007) noted are "spirits" of people raised by magic and have appetite for sex, money and blood whereby contracts are entered into between the them and the owners in terms of which the owners provide sex, blood and the *zvikiwambo* provide money which they steal from some people. Though a focus on agency/action would open space for different entities including invisible forces, what often matters in everyday life is not mere action/agency but effectiveness of the action or agency. It is such effective or fruitful actions or agency that is subject to *kutenda* as indeed evident in the vernacular proverb "*totenda tenda maruva tadya chakata*" (we express gratitude after eating).

It is such fruitfulness of action or agency that also underscored the contestations between the Tonga in Northern Zimbabwe and missionaries as noted by Colson (1971). Missionaries preached about the devil and

possibility or possession by evil spirits but the Tonga held they had good evidence of the effectiveness of their ancestors whose offerings missionaries held would lead one to hell and burn forever. Yet (Colson notes), this clashed with the general conviction that people who offered to ancestors would become ancestors and receive offerings in their turn. These arguments from Colson's ethnography could have been important but in view of ways in which some villagers considered themselves to be suffering due to malevolent dead in the form of *zvikwambo*, it is certainly necessary to also consider moral issues in relating with the deceased. But for purposes of this thesis what is necessary to note is that implied in *kutenda* is also the historicity of agency which is to say that agency is held to exceed the present or contemporaneous.

The way in which some villagers considered the worlds of the dead (to which *kutenda* was often directed) to influence the world of the living was also evident to me on 7 March 2011. On that day, I went to the *svikiro* medium and upon arrival; she informed me that her mother had died a few days back. When her mother was seriously ill, the *svikiro*'s deceased father "came from the *Nyikadzimu* world of ancestors" (*vakauya*) and said, '*makanonoka mungadai makavapa mushonga wemudumbu nokuti ndimo maivarwadza. Chimbomirai kuenda navo kuchipatara kwamuri kuda kuenda navo motanga matsvaga mushonga wemudumbu* (you have not been quick enough, you should have given her medication/herbs for stomach troubles because it is her stomach that is painful Can you postpone taking her to hospital where you want to take her to, first get some herbs for stomach troubles). Her mother requested her husband (father to the medium) thus, 'You better take me with you' but her father asked whereto and her dying mother said, 'to where you are staying'. The *svikiro* said her father was quiet for a while. When the *svikiro* went to collect *mushonga wemudumbu* (herbs for the stomach) from a woman who had it, she was pursued and informed that her mother had just died. The *svikiro* ended her narration of her dying mother's experiences by saying to me, '*vanhu vanotambirwa nevadzimu vavo kuNyikadzimu kana vafa*' (when people die they are accompanied to the world of ancestors by their deceased *hama*). But she said she had just been to a *nhimbe* work parties where villagers were being urged by leaders to reconcile, forgive and work together. She said the problem is that it is *vanhu* who are living who say these things about forgiveness yet they do not let the *vadzimu/vakuru* lead. She said the *vakuru* then just watch even if things are not being properly done; they will be asking, '*saka vanhu ava varikuti varikuitei* (so they just watch and ask one another



whether the people involved know what they will be trying to do). There is need to invite the *vakuru* so that they talk and say what they want to be done so that there can be progress and there is need to thank the elders when they have done us good things”. When accompanying me home the *svikiro* said, ‘*apa ndipo panzvimbo yenyu yemukwerera*’ (this is your place for the rain ceremonies). I asked her to tell me if the villagers had managed that year to perform *mukwerera* but she said, ‘*makarambaka imi nekuda kwekushanja saka wakaitirwa kumwewo. Vanhu vanoramba midzimu vachitya kufumurwa. Umwe kwaMurambinda akanzi nevamwe mbuya (mudzimu) komusoro wemukwasha uri mudura urikuudiyi* (you, referring to other villagers, refused to perform the *mukwerera* because you are not clean so we performed the ceremony elsewhere. People refused to accept and thank their ancestors because they fear that if ancestors intermingle with the living, the ancestors will reveal the secret bad dealings including about bad *mushonga*, which harm others, that some of their descendants)

In the medium’s narrative there are other entities that are invisible but help the visible human beings. Equally in Try’s experiences reported above the agency of individuals is connected to the agency of others and there are ways in which other individuals who have assisted one, even if subsequently absent, are gratulated. Try’s illness had debilitated him in such a way that he could not operate as an individual and so he subsequently showed appreciation of the work on NGOs that helped him with food, doctors and hospital staff who helped him with medication and his brother who helped ferry him to the hospital. A closer look, in the next chapter, at the ways in which villagers attended to their health challenges indicates complex ways in which they sensed the presence of absent others that had import on their lives.



## **Sensing Presences?**

### Health, Illness and Survival in Everyday Life

The night of the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 was as quiet as one would expect in a village that is distant from the main roads and from busy shopping centres. On this day I lay asleep in a hut. But I was not alone; there were two young boys who also lay on the other side of the hut deep in their sleep. At about midnight I thought I heard knocks on the door which were loud enough to wake me up. Still lying on the bed, I checked to ascertain if it was not one of the children who were knocking on something but the children were still asleep. Grippled with the fear that members of the political parties who were at each other's throats had for some reason decided to visit me in the middle of the night, I remained on my bed. But before long I saw two figures enter the hut and one of them came straight up to me and then sat on me. Momentarily I felt huge strength suddenly well up in me and I heaved the figure off me. I rose up and then instantly the figures disappeared from the hut via the door which I was sure I had locked before going to sleep.

I had already been told many stories about experiences of villagers who were victims of midnight attacks by political party activists who either broke up the doors when their victims refused to open them. But what surprised me was that the door to the hut in which I was sleeping was not broken up. The figures appeared to have simply slipped in and out undeterred by the locked door. I was not sure if I was merely dreaming, or having what psychologists define as “paranormal experiences” or paranoia to explain the experiences that differ from those that are conventionally understood as normal. Nor was I sure that I was not manifesting the signs of traumatic experiences that are ordinarily understood to feature when one has exposure to stressful events including exposure to the kind of violence that I was researching. What I was sure about was that I was occupying such a space where certainty and uncertainty often intersect. But their intersection did not necessarily imply that I was lacking because I often could not grasp certainty: in the context uncertainty was

an inevitable part of everyday life and had to be lived with rather than merely dispensed with. What further complicated my experiences was that during my preliminary fieldwork, about a year earlier, I was informed by prophets in the churches I participated in that I was on my way to becoming a prophet and that I would experience and see things that those who were not informed about prophecy may consider strange, if unique. Indeed the strangeness of things was part of what I was studying and the spaces which I sought to enter to study could have been themselves understood in terms of the strangeness of their violence and the resilience of the strengths to survive. Moving from places of relative safety in towns, and from the university as I did, into violence ridden villages could itself have been interpreted as strangeness. Similarly leaving one's family in town to stay away from them for the study could have been interpreted as estrangement which is in *chivanhu* a form of strangeness. But to consider some things as a priori strange is often to demarcate space; it suggests contentment in the spaces of the familiar. It suggests unreadiness to move to the borders between spaces, between that which may be defined as strange and the familiar. But then it is often within the borders of spaces, of things that one gets shaken and challenged including by the often unexpected and inexplicable presences that visit one. Indeed there is often no guarantee that one's own presence in such border spaces does not itself constitute both strangeness and familiarity to others. So here I was in a village, in a hut, in the middle of the night asleep in a context of violence where like other villagers that were threatened by the violence I often sensed that I was hovering on the borders of things. I sometimes felt that I hovered between the borders of risk/safety, certainty/uncertainty, and reality/unreality. And as indicated in reference to the riskiness that I sensed even from inside the hut, risk and safety were not necessarily located in separate territories.

What I call sensing presences is an invitation to share such border spaces, the generative moments they offer to rethink what it means to inhabit/not to inhabit the border spaces marked by the presences of things often conventionally understood as opposites. I want to argue that the kind of everyday life about which I write involved inhabiting such border spaces, between things, in which sensing things was an important part of survival. And sensing things involved intermingling with the world in various ways some of which entailed reversing the conventional order of senses. Though conventional modes of sensing tend to be privileged in

formal epistemologies senses and sensing are for Serres (2008) understood differently by scholars and in different contexts. Senses for Serres allow the body to mingle with the world. Understanding senses as intermingled and mixed in Serres' sense allows one to interrogate epistemologies which, for some historical reasons, often privilege and universalise the physical ocular senses in matters of knowledge. If as Serres observes with references to debates by philosophers such as Democritus, Aristotle and Socrates the number of senses has not been always settled at the conventional five, it is unclear why humanity is often assumed to invariably have or stress similar senses.

Few African scholars have interrogated the often taken for granted assumptions that humanity invariably have only five senses. Among the few who have questioned such assumptions is Kathryn Linn Geurts (2002) whose research in Ghana indicates that some people conceive and stress different senses. Her research indicates that in Ghana the five senses model has little relevance where other senses such as balance (physically and psychologically) are essential components of what it means to be human. These arguments by Geurts highlight the need not to assume that the five senses model is universal and applicable to everyone. Her argument suggests the need to cognise ways in which different senses play out differently in different contexts. In the context of such contentions, it is germane to also consider how different ways of sensing play out in contexts of crisis such as the one I have studied. In the context of the crisis such as marked Zimbabwe, different senses were deployed differently in everyday life struggles for survival.

But to speak of things being unstable is not necessarily to suggest binaries, rather it is merely to underscore the shifting character of things in everyday life. It is to take note of the fluid character of some things in everyday life. It is to note ways in which villagers shifted from one mode of survival to the other in ways that rendered complex comings and goings. Perhaps a good examples of the prevalence of such comings and goings in everyday life is Chavunduka's (1978) (see also Simmons 2012) observation that the Shona patients switched from biomedicine to "traditional" healing, and vice versa, often relying not only on their own decisions but on those of their kin. While his study is useful in understanding the lack of secure moorings in the kind of everyday life that I studied, it did not dwell on ways of sensing presences that explain illness and health. Such switches between modes of health services, as I will show below, also prevailed in my

research area but what I want to focus on are ways of sensing things rather than merely the switches by patients from one service to the other. I want to focus on the comings and goings not only of patients but also of the different things of which presences were often sensed differently.

This notion of presence upon which I wish to ground modes of surviving illness in everyday life is well captured by Jean-Luc Nancy's (1993: 5) argument that presence is coming which is also a going away, it is back and forth movement, the coming that effaces itself and brings itself back. This kind of presence is one that eludes conventional modes of representation, it eludes being defined as a subject or object, and it can neither be defined as purely present or absent. With respect to this chapter on health, I seek to render the idea of presence in terms of the back and forth movements of patients, of the context in which drugs were often available but also unavailable, cash was often available but unavailable, and illnesses were present but they were also absent. It is a kind of presence, I will argue, that is understood by situating oneself in the borders of things where many different things are ongoing without reducing themselves to being invariably present in the representational sense of being ever-present. In this sense I wish to shift attention from studies that begin by seeking to understand what is (or deemed to be) present to a mode of analysis that begins from presences. As I felt that I was in a liminal space, I want to begin not necessarily from conventional variables such as social-cultural, biological, physical and psychiatric imperatives in health and illness (see for instance Kleinman 1986, 1988, Kiev 1972) but from the more fluid everyday life modes of understanding issues of illness and health. Thus the focus is on presence, it is on the coming into presence of things. While other scholars have understood some matters of health in terms of mysticism and esoterism (see for instance Ahyi 1997, Kiniffo 1997), I wish to understand them in terms of the ways in which things come into presence. I wish to understand the things in terms of their presences that is their comings and goings some of which may escape attention.

Understanding things in terms of comings and goings would extend the work of other scholars that suggest the existence of mysticism in African health issues. For instance while Kiniffo (1997) notes that needles are held to be "mysteriously" placed in the bodies of patients and healers remove the needles by the magnetic laying of hands, the idea of "mystery" can be explained in terms of the comings and goings of

*mweya/mhepo*. The presence of *mweya/mhepo* is hinted at in Simmons (2006) who argues that *muti*'s (herbs) potency is not self evident because it comes from external sources, that is, ancestors or the healing spirits and it is given agentive power through men and women's intentions. The ability to use *muti* implies a moral relationship with ancestors healing spirit and or God without whose support the *muti* remains inert. The idea that this chapter wishes to develop is that there is need to move beyond preoccupation with, which is not to say abandon, the materialities that has characterised scholarship. Green (1996) for instance focuses on Catholic medicines including holy water, blessed oils, ashes, amulets and palm branches placed above doorways at Easter; the Catholic amulets include rosaries and medals won to protect from witchcraft and misfortune. Whether or not these palpable medicines and *muti* should be regarded as fetishes has, as I will show below, been subject to debates in scholarship.

Understanding things in terms of ways in which they come into presence makes it possible to interrogate not only notions of placebo but also related notions of "fetishism" in so far as they are connected to African religion, health and healing as well as to the ideas of absent presences that I grapple with in this chapter. Though some scholars have considered modes of engagement in terms of "fetishism" (Taussig 1986), the term "fetishism" and its implications in the context of Africa have been critiqued. For instance Opoku (1978: 4) argues that the term "fetishism" as derived from the Portuguese word *fetico* meant any work of art or man-made religious object such as talisman amulets but the terms latter became a synonym for African religions with the implication that such religions amounted to nothing more than the use of worship of charms. The term "fetishism" in this sense is considered imprecise because religions in Africa mean more than the word "fetish" implies as there is in African languages a clear distinction made between man-made religious objects and spiritual beings or deities. Other scholars like Rattray (1927) have similarly argued that "fetishism" entails abandoning the Africans' own distinct classifications and divisions of beings into for instance ancestors and the Supreme Being since "fetishism" focuses on objects. This focus on objects explains the scientific quandaries with respect to the placebo. As Harrington (1997) argues, placebos are the ghosts that haunt the house of biomedical objectivity; it is the creatures that rises up from the dark and expose the paradoxes and fissures in definitions of the real and active factors in treatment. Though some

have argued that healers use ineffective or placebo dosages (Shapiro and Shapiro 1997), other scholars have argued that rationality and objectivity are not special characteristics of a single kind of knowledge-science- but results from whatever institutional practices serve a particular culture or create self-evident validity (Turnbull 2000). Recognition of different rationalities underpins Human's (2012) observation that there are exceptional cases in which in order to diagnose disease effectively, a doctor must often break with protocol and concede to the risk inherent in this divergence from authority. By relying on traces of evidence not modelled, and by diverging from protocols, doctors depend on a type of knowledge, an excess to that which is considered central to thought process and this challenges modernist ideas of classification.

A focus on presence may not be understood merely in terms of hybridity of the things that come into presence. Indeed if in everyday life things come and go life can not be viewed merely in terms of hybridity which would privilege the moments and product of conjugations of things. Yet when things come and go in everyday life they often miss as much as they meet one another. In its emphasis on the product, a focus on hybridity misses the misses that characterize the goings and comings of things in everyday life. Presence may be inferred from what Ingold (2010) calls creative entanglements. Ingold's work is marked by his rejection of a focus on the materiality of things and by his insistence that things are in fluid becomings where the material things are enmeshed with the nonmaterial including the wind that he argues is understood in some societies to be life. Thus distinguishing objects from things Ingold argues that the object stands before us as a fait accompli presenting its congealed, outer surface to our inspection, the thing by contrast is a going on, or better, a place where several goings on become entwined. While Ingold's explication is useful in so far as it advises that the place to start is with the fluid character of things rather than materials, a focus on becomings risks occluding what I have called unbecomings that are also part of everyday life. Such a focus occludes moments when some things cease flowing, that is when the flows are for some reasons blocked. In other words a focus merely on flows neglects the existence of boundaries and closures including the ritual creation of space as ways to define territory (see for instance Thornton 1980).

Some such unbecomings arguably had their presence in the state of the health services in Zimbabwe where hospitals and clinics were bedevilled by absence of drugs, frequent strikes, brain drain, derelict equipment and



where some patients were often detained for failing to pay fees can hardly be defined as a becoming. Equally the vilification of healers, who could have provided alternative health, as archaic witchdoctors (see for instance Jeater 2007, Chavunduka 1980) can hardly be defined as a becoming. For these reason I wish to understand the modes of engagement among the villagers in terms of hauntology, as indicated with reference to Derrida in chapter three, rather than merely in terms of becomings. Hauntology makes it possible to understand life in terms of becomings and unbecoming, in terms of the various visitations and presences, and manifesting that feature as part of everyday life particularly in a context of crisis. It allows one to situate in the borders of the real/unreal, certain/uncertain, life and death, illness/wellness. By so doing it allows one to dwell in the spaces where things are not necessarily settled in spite of the often effortful struggles to settle them. Such efforts to settle the health challenges were evident both at government level as well as that of the everyday life. So to appreciate the everyday life modes of engagements I will start by briefly noting some challenges at the government level highlighted by some Members of Parliament.

### **Some Brief Notes on Health and Survival during the Crisis**

The Parliamentary debates of the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2007, highlighted challenges in the health sector including recurring industrial action, high staff attrition, inadequate funding, old equipment and infrastructure, incomplete projects, lack of drugs, inaccessibility of health services and the collapse of referral systems. The Minister of Health and Child Welfare noted during the debates that the majority of the citizens could no longer afford to buy drugs due to high prices. Further challenges noted included fuel shortages, poor road networks and aged fleets of vehicles all of which challenges made it difficult for stock to be moved to various health centres.

In the context of the challenges raised by the Minister of Health and Child Welfare there was a debate in which some Members of Parliament suggested that citizens should be encouraged to rely on “traditional” medicine. But other Members like Mr Sibanda argued that, with respect to “traditional” medicine, one of the questions was of efficiency Vis-a Vis dosage. He noted that “traditional” doctors were not well educated on the issue of dosage such that dosage became counter effective and this could kill a lot of people. He argued

further that in the “technology age” there was need to be encouraging usage of scientific medicines than resort to the “prestone” age. He further noted that there was need to prevent citizens from consulting “witch hunters” and healers who would perform divination (Hansard, March 16 2010).

What the Member of Parliament failed to note was that Zimbabweans had for a long time relied on both biomedical institutions as well as on healers (Chavunduka 1978). Many Shona people took some of their illnesses to scientific medical practitioners in hospitals and clinics and private doctors’ surgeries and others to healers, that is, diviners and herbalists. This has also been noted by Ross (2009) in her study where some of her research subjects consulted biomedical as well as healers. Thus the Zimbabwean Member of Parliament failed to note all these dynamics as well as the global resurgence of “traditional” medicines and the support it is having from global organizations such as the World Health Organisation (Gurib-Fakim and Kasilo 2010, Mhame et al 2010) including the fact that about eighty percent of the population in developing countries including the African region use traditional medicine for their primary health care needs. He failed to take cognisance of the fact that the notions of traditional and scientific emerged in a context of contestations over medical and medicinal space (Karen 2008). The Member of Parliament failed to contextualise African medicine in the emerging literature where as Susan Reynolds Whyte (1989: 289) cited in Westerlund (2006: 133) notes afflictions which were once dealt with in Monographs on African religion and cosmology now belong to the realm of medicine and medical anthropology. What scholars knew as divination now appears as diagnosis. What scholars analysed as ritual is now termed therapy. The victim of supernatural forces is called patient and his/her relatives the therapy managing group. While knowledge including the need to develop and apply scientific criteria and methods for proof of safety and efficacy of medicines is undoubtedly important (see also Gurib-Fakim and Kasilo) it is important to note that knowledge alone does not guarantee survival. Knowledge has not necessarily eradicated suffering and want in the world (Maxwell 2005) and therefore it is necessary to think about survival not merely in terms of the presence/absence of knowledge but in terms of the presence/absence of wisdom to survive.

While such everyday life modes of surviving ill health like consulting healers (see also Waite 2000) and prophets (see also Dube et al 2011) have often been judged in terms of lack of knowledge, the modes of

engagement can be read to underscore the value of dynamism and diversity in everyday life. But it is not only the dynamism and diversity of modes of surviving illness that are indicated; also implied in the everyday life modes of engagement are different ways of sensing presences. Implied also are different ways of sensing the presence/absence of illness, different ways of sensing the presence/absence of things responsible for illness and for recovery. Everyday life in the midst of such differences can be understood in terms of translation, in terms of movements back and forth during moments of navigating the differences. But unlike in studies by Chavunduka (1978) (see also Ross 2009) that focus on movements by human beings seeking treatments from different practitioners, this chapter also looks at the things much more broadly as constituted in movement back and forth. It looks at some things that are responsible for illness as involved in processes of translation that enable them to have presence even where it might not be readily possible to represent them in conventional ways as present. In other words the chapter looks at the shifts and flows of things in everyday life and the ways in which the things involved in the shifts and flows were sensed in so far as they were deemed to impact on matters of health.

### **The Comings and Goings of Everyday Life**

When I met Fasti, she had just joined another apostolic church in her village and she was happy to have joined it. She was happy to have withdrawn her membership from her previous church, also an apostolic church but with different rules for members. Although there were many apostolic churches in her village, some of them such as the Johanne Marange, of which she had been a member together with her in-laws, did not allow members to consult hospitals. The church's allegation, as Fatsi indicated to me, was that the medicines that are used in hospitals are derived from "traditional" herbs and so the leaders ruled that the members of the church had to desist from consulting hospitals. Although she was unhappy with the rules of that church, she had been forced into it by her in-laws who were part of the leadership of the church. The incident that saw her finally withdrawing her membership involved the illness of her four-year-old daughter. When her daughter fell ill she immediately consulted a prophet of the Mugodhi Church who upon realizing the critical condition advised Fatsi to consult the clinic immediately. The prophet advised her that if she did

not consult the clinic that day her daughter was going to die at night. Fearful that her in-laws would not allow her to consult the clinic but also fearful that her daughter was going to die if she did not act, Fatsi decided to sneak to the clinic where injections were administered to her daughter. But unfortunately for Fatsi she was advised by the nurses that her daughter had to spend the night at the clinic for purposes of monitoring her condition and administering treatments after every few hours. She tried to convince the nurses on the premise that she did not have money to pay for the overnight stay so she suggested she could instead return with her daughter the following morning. However the nurses maintained that she had to be continuously monitored throughout the night. So with dejection she eventually sent word to her husband so that he would bring some clothes for her and her daughter as well as some money.

The following morning Fatsi was advised by the nurses to take her daughter to another hospital called Murambinda which was about twenty kilometers from the clinic. Though she still had worries about the reprisals from her in-laws as well as about the fact that she did not have enough money for the travel, Fatsi obliged. Luckily a couple offered her a free lift insisting that she could use the little amount of money she had for her daughter's treatment. Happy that the nurses treated her with hospitality and that some fellow patients assisted her with food, Fatsi returned back home to find out that her in-laws were already busy inviting one another for a meeting in which they wanted to accuse her of going to the clinic. But once again Fatsi noted that she was lucky because the in-laws failed to agree among themselves since some of them argued that she could not have simply watched her daughter die.

Salient in Fatsi's case are some assumptions about presence and absence that are often missed with a focus on things that are ontologically present. Because the nurses focus on Fatsi and her daughter that they could see they missed the presence of her in-laws who effectively were absent presences in Fatsi's dialogues with the nurses. Equally in considering herself unable to take her daughter to the hospital for lack of money, Fatsi may be understood to have missed the possibilities that she would be assisted with money, which seemed to have been absent but were in fact present. In both instances the challenge was to avoid focusing merely on what was materially present as well as materially absent. The challenge was to focus on the shifts and flows that offered opportunities even when possibilities appeared to be absent. The challenge was to focus on the

presence of things, which is to say, on their comings and goings that rendered them neither present nor absent. The challenge was to think not in terms of pure absence and pure presence but in terms of presence that was absence and vice versa. Suggested in all this is a need to focus not necessarily on the ontological present but on how things come and go. As shown in the case, a focus on things as purely present and purely absent often generate and exacerbate hopelessness even in situations where possibilities for manoeuvre exist.

The challenges of focusing merely on biomedical explanations were best exemplified by Fatsi's other experience of illness in her family. When her son was ill she took him to the hospital so that he would be treated of the stomach pains that beset him. Fatsi noted that her son was examined by the doctor who then explained his illness as a genetic disease of which name she did not remember. Contrary to the doctor's explanation, Fatsi maintained that the reason why her son always relapsed into the illness as soon as he stopped using the pills was that he had been made to lick some soil bearing worm eggs by a woman in the village with whom she did not have good relations. So for three years she consulted the hospital doctor at Murambinda Hospital but the pain stopped each time her son used the pills but it reappeared once he stopped using the pills. By the end of the three years Fatsi noted thus: "I heard my heart telling me to consult a prophet. I first went back to the clinic but I tore the part of the medical report which stated that it was a genetic disease that afflicted my son. When I went to the prophet I was given a *munamoto* (prayer) comprising lemons that were prayed for. My son had to drink the *munamoto* for three weeks during which I was consulting the prophet. After using the *munamoto* my son passed out waste mixed with many long worms that could fill a cup. When he recovered the prophet gave me another *munamoto* which comprised a red string which he prayed for and tied around my son's waist so that the illness would not revisit him. Although this illness occurred when he was five year old it has not recurred and now he is twelve".

Underscored in Fatsi's experiences are not only her comings and goings from and to the hospital but also the comings and goings of the illness. Her vacillations can be read to imply the habitation in her mind by indecision that was at the same time a decision. The vacillations can be understood in terms of the elusiveness of both truth and falsity in a context where things are often on the move becoming present but absent, becoming absent but present. It is, as I show in this chapter, by paying attention in everyday life to such

presences that are absences and absences that are presences that it becomes clear that things are not necessarily what they appear to be. It is not necessarily the materialities of such things that matter but often the ways in which they are deemed to be visited by other presences/absences. The presence of the string after the prayers was no longer that of the string, it became the presence of *munamoto* (prayer) which is to say it became *munamoto* rather than a string. The primacy in this sense was no longer given to the materiality of the string but to the connections it was embedded in, which is to say, its more fluid life giving properties. Primacy was then given to the properties deemed to have assumed presence in the string. The challenge then is to sense (not just to see) such a string as a string but also as not a string, it is to sense not only the material aspects but also the nonmaterial aspects that convoked its morphing into or manifestngs as another presence. The experiences of Fatsi do not suggest that villagers had no notion of physical causation or specific organisms causing illness (as Snow 1977: 141 suggests) because she clearly attributed the illness to the soil and worms that she saw coming out of her son's body. Equally her experience does not imply that she had no idea of a mere string only that she considered a string that had been prayed for to have become more than a string.

It might be called a mere string after the *munamoto* by one whose presence was not at the convocation and whose senses deny them the ability to sense it as not merely a string. But calling it a mere string as such could be a good way of saying I fail to sense other presences or that the presences are elusive to one's senses. With the presence of things in motion, in this sense, it becomes possible for the true to become the false and vice versa in a manner that destabilises the dichotomies that are often assumed between them. Because, as I will show below, some things are held to manifest in different forms and to be highly mobile, the dichotomies between true and false are not invariable in everyday life. One might for instance consider the narratives among villagers that the *njuzu* (half human half fish entities that manifest as *mbepo/mweya*) do not want to be seen by some human beings and that they (Burbridge 1924), "quickly manifest as fish", wind/air or simply vanish upon intrusion of their spaces by human beings. Such narratives highlight the propensities of some things to manifest in impermanent forms thereby rendering dichotomies troubled.

If such ambivalences of things in everyday life are considered in the context of the crisis in the country which was marked by oscillations between presence and absences of drugs, the presences and absences of medical staff, the presences and absences of cash, it becomes possible to conceive the ambivalences as part of the broader context. In a context where things were constantly oscillating and in flux, it they could not have been taken for granted as one things could as well have been quite another. Within the broader national context where drugs were being sold on the streets and where hospitals kept in store drugs some of which were long past their expiry dates, the ambivalences are nothing surprising. A thing could be what it appeared to be but it could as well turn into something else.

Implied in such ambivalences and often rapid turns of things in such everyday life, are the ways in which things often elude representation even if they may have presence. When a thing understood to vanish, elude glances and then reappear such as was done by the villagers in their modes of evading violence, representing a thing as purely present is often difficult where becoming absent is its other attribute. Conversely it becomes difficult to represent a thing as purely absent where becoming present is its other attribute. This suggests a kind of world where life is lived in terms of presences, in terms of the comings and goings of things rather than in terms of only that which can be readily conventionally represented as present.

A case that indicates how presences were conceived in everyday life is that of Grub who I met on 27 March 2011. His narrative indicated how such presences were negotiated in the spaces between consulting healers and consulting hospitals. Grub remarked thus: “There are some things that can be fixed by the hospitals: other things need *n’angas* (healers) or prophets. We consult *n’angas* or prophets first. You may not be treated well at the hospitals because there is *mbepo* (wind) that make it difficult for the doctors to diagnose well. Doctors may say after operation that they are not seeing any problem. The *mbepo* will be pushed (*kusundiwa*) so that you spend a long time without getting treatments. For prophets they treat even if the one who is ill is absent, they see the problems even for family members who may not be present and they give water to drink or to use when bathing. After doing all this we go to the clinic and we do not encounter problems. First we fix our things here because *mbepo* will be present. There is need to continue to remove the *mbepo* until the patient feels that it has been removed. But the bad people sending the *mbepo* may continue

sending it so that the illness is on and off. Even our homesteads, we cleanse them of the *mbepo*, the *mbepo* will be present sitting in the homesteads. The Prophets can give us water to spray so that witches do not get in. But the witches may continue to send the *mbepo*. The *n'anga* puts *midzi* (roots) in bottles which are planted during the night around the homesteads so that witches do not get in”.

The above comments were also underscored by a *n'anga* called Dhodho. Dhodho said: *“Tinorapa mumisha munenge mapinda mashavi ekuroya anongoda kuuraya vamwe. Misha inogadzirwa kuti varoyi vatadze kusvika kuroya vamwe. Pane boko dzinoroverwa usati waisa bango rako, boko dzemiti dzinochengetedza musha nokuti havachazokwanisi kupinda mumusha. Varoyi vanoramba vachiedza vachishevedzana kuti vabatsirane kubvisa boko kuti vapinde. Vanozowana umwe pakati pavo anokwanisa kubvisa boko iya. Hoko dzinoda kuiswa itsva kusati kwapera makore gumi kuti varoyi vasapinde. Kana musha usina kugadzirwa zviri nyore kupinda, vamwe vanotouita base rekuroya. Mudzimu haugoni kuchengetedza musha pasina boko vanokurirwa. Ukaroora muroyi kana shavi rake ririguru vanouya voita base mumusha. Murume wacho pfungwa dzake dzinenge dzisisiri mushe, anongoteera mukadzi. Mudzimu haugoni kuchengetedza musha pasina boko vanokurirwa* (we treat homesteads so that witches will not be able to bewitch others or to kill them. There are sticks that have to be used as pegs when you build a house so that witches will not enter. The witches will however keep on trying to enter and they seek the assistance of the witches until one of them is able to undo the pegs. So, one has to renew the pegs once every ten years so that witches will not enter. If a homestead is not protected it is easy for witches to enter. But if you marry a witch the homestead will be used as a base for witches. The husband like a zombie will simply play to the wife’s bidding. If there are no pegs ancestors will have difficulty protecting the homestead.”)

While it is often assumed that an individual is invariably an individual, here the model of an individual that is posed is one in which he/she is possibly accompanied by presences that may not be sensible to the doctor. The model in Grub’s rendering is one where the patient understands himself/herself and the homesteads as visited by presences which are held to elude the senses of the medical personnel. On the other hand, it is a model where the doctor is understood to begin by focusing on the individual patient. Also salient in this case is the fact that on one hand the patients start by looking at and addressing the nonmaterial more fluid presences before they take the sick to the hospital, on the other hand the doctor begins by examining the



individual patient. In this encounter between patient and doctor, the doctor is portrayed as rather unwary of the kind of presences the patient understands him or herself to be visited by and to be meddling in the interactions between the doctor and patient. In other words the remarks suggest that what matters is not just the presence of the doctor and the patient but the presence of other things, as well, which are held to enhance or block processes of treatment.

While the vicissitudes and the ways in which things are understood to enhance or block processes of treatment can be interpreted in terms of the broader context in which the crisis generated national level vicissitudes, they may also be interpreted as an inherent part of everyday life crisis notwithstanding. Indeed at a material level, the vicissitudes with respect to the presence of drugs, equipment and staff in hospitals constituted blocks to the treatment of patients. And indeed at a nonmaterial level the presence of a social context of the crisis marked by acute shortages of basic commodities can be understood to have also constituted blocks to the treatment of patients. In this sense the patient bearing such a model can be read to be importing the elusiveness of things in the broader national context to the particular doctor-patient context where the doctor is held to fail to address, if also cognise, the presence of elusive things that block his vocation. In such a context where the wind that Grub referred to is understood to manifest in other forms, rather than being reducible to the *mbepo*, the model may be understood to underscore the lack of prioritized attention in formal health provisions to the vicissitudes, flows or comings and goings of things be they material or nonmaterial.

Grub's allusion to the *mbepo* that causes illness and to witches can be understood to underline the significance of attention to flows in everyday life. But these flows have to be understood within the context where the wind is understood to morph into and manifest as other things. They also have to be understood within a context where witchcraft is not necessarily reducible to the occult but is also explained in terms of the broader absences and presences of everyday life. When in the context of the interparty violence some villagers used herbicides and pesticides to poison livestock belonging to their opponents they for instance codenamed their exercise "operation *chidboma*" (operation ghost), as noted in chapter three, because they poisoned the livestock by sneaking in during the nights. By likening themselves to ghosts, the villagers can be

understood to have likened their operation to a kind of witchcraft but one that targeted the livestock of their opponents. Such “operation *chidboma*” was parallel to reports in other parts of the country where political party activists often forced their opponents, some of whom abducted to camps, to drink pesticides and herbicides. In these instances, the idea can be read to have been to be absent yet present: in their hide and seek, the opponents engaged in comings and goings that rendered them absent but also present. The idea was as is implied in the terms *chidboma* (ghost), that the villagers used, to haunt the other without necessarily becoming present to the gaze of others. Suggested in the modes of engagement marked by such comings and goings of things is the issue of how to sense the world without privileging the stable present of which preponderance often obscures the messiness of the lived world.

To designate the absence that is presence of things, that is to say the duplicities, of everyday life I have preferred what Derrida (1993, 2006) calls hauntology. This idea of hauntology allows a shift from privileging ontology and categories to a mode of writing that makes it possible to conceive things as coming and going in ways that often elude representation. In other words hauntology makes it possible to write about the instabilities, duplicities and vacillations that often characterize moments of crisis. It makes it possible to rethink how the presences and absences of things are sensed without necessarily privileging what can be readily conventionally represented as present/absent. But also in its focus on the ongoingness of things it conceives senses in terms of the comings and goings; it conceives sensing as coming to sense. In this way it highlights the debatability of senses as conventionally understood yet it also underscores the temporality of sensing as sensing that which has temporal presence within the reach of one’s senses. Focusing on dreams, divinations and prophecies I now wish to show some ways in which different ways of sensing presences played out in everyday life.

### **Hauntology: Making Sense of Presences through Dreams, Divination and Prophecies**

The significance of dreams and other ways of sensing presences is indicated in the three related cases that I will detail below and then connect together.

The first case was that of Nod a vendor who I met in February 2011. She stated thus: “I was assisted by some prophets this year. Last week a prophetess I did not even know visited me because she had had dreams about me. I was not feeling well when she visited me. The prophetess assisted me with *munamoto* (prayer) which I was advised to use for bathing for nine days, now I am feeling ok. *Paive nechinhua chaivepo chakandiruma pamusana pachirema, kurwadza nekuzimba*. (There was a thing that was biting me at the back which back was also feeling heavy, painful and swollen). “At my shop I was no longer having customers. Now I am receiving customers. Some people burnt their *mushonga* (herbs) in a drain by my shop just before I started feeling ill. They first wrapped the *mushonga* with papers and then set it alight producing bad smoke that also made me cough. The prophetess sprayed holy water from the three perennial rivers namely Mupfure, Nyaguwi and Mazoe. She prayed for the water from the three perennial rivers and then advised me to bath using it. I only gave her money for bus fare to go to the rivers to collect the water, she helped me and so on the ninth day which was yesterday I started feeling well again. She also informed me that had I seen the thing which had bitten me I was going to die immediately”.

There are three issues that I will pull out including the significance of dreams in matters of illness, the fact that some things that are deemed to cause illness are not supposed to be seen and the fact that she used water from perennial rivers.

The second case is that of Mar who lived very close to where I stayed during the early part of my fieldwork in January 2011. One morning she came to fetch water from the borehole at the house where I stayed but she looked disturbed. Like she usually did when she came to fetch water, she pulled a mat and sat down for a while to discuss issues in the village with my informant’s family. But this time she narrated dreams she had just had in which many people appeared at her homestead hunting for her. She noted thus: “I ran away and hid. One of the people chasing me then asked me “so this is where you are hiding?” The man who asked me was peeping through the window to get a glimpse of me. I pinched him and then beat him as well as the others who were with him. They wanted to catch me and my daughter. After I beat them there came some many creatures which looked like dolls that could walk. I beat them but they produced air which was smelly. I beat them using my garment. They were resisting”.

This dream shows some of the kinds of things villagers like Mar considered engendering some illnesses. But some such things were deemed to be experienced first at the level of dreams and then translated into the wakeful lives. To note such things is not necessarily to imply that the villagers attributed illnesses solely to such moments: the villagers also had other ways of explaining illnesses such as common cold which generally did not occasion connection to such dreams. It was the kinds of illnesses that were deemed to be prolonged or resistant to cures that were often connected to such dreams. Now to appreciate some of the ways in which such dreams were considered to translate to the level of wakefulness, I will note a dream in which I was involved and how it was translated by a prophetess afterwards.

The third and last case I wish to note here is the dream that I had just after Zan visited my informant in January 2012. Zan was brother to Lee, my informant, and he had just visited him after a stint in the diaspora. Although his visit was short, lasting only about an hour and although it was my first time to meet him, I had an upsetting dream the night Zan departed from my informant's homestead. In the dream Zan walked west holding his car in his hands but his mother walked east. But in between them was a man who hid from them while grinning. In the dream Zan's mother had been driven to a sea of dirty smelly water and my sense in the dream was that it was the grinning man who was doing this. Upon asking him, in the dream, why he did such a bad thing, he immediately bolted away and transformed himself into what I thought was an herb. The dream generated worries on my part and upon waking up I informed my informant about it. We discussed the dream as we usually did and during the discussion I indicated to my informant that I had a sense that Zan his brother, children and mother were likely to get into trouble. I had woken up that morning feeling that I had been struggling in the dream to assist them but I did not quite know what to do to assist.

Unknown to us was that Zan had failed to drive to his home the previous evening after his visit to my informant. Some thirty kilometers on my way to the Capital city, Harare, that day I saw Zan's car parked by the road side so I decided to drop off and have a chat with him. He was sitting beside the car and his two children were sleeping at the back. Immediately after greeting him, Zan informed me that he had failed to drive home the previous evening because his car developed some electrical faults which nearly led him into an accident that evening. What surprised me was that during his narrative of the incident he stated that from the

time immediately before the incident he felt like some wind blew sand into his face such that his eyes could no longer see well because of the sand that got into them. I decided to assist him fix his car but then a few minutes after our meeting his five year old daughter fell ill and started vomiting.

After assisting Zan we drove to his home but when we arrived we were informed by his mother that his two other children had also just fallen ill before our arrival. His mother also narrated what she stated to be an odd event in which she was nearly horned by cows that had been fighting that day. She had tried to intervene so that the cows would stop fighting but the cows turned to her and chased her away only to be assisted by other villagers. After taking his children to the clinic, Zan decided to consult a prophetess who stayed some 5 kilometres from his homestead. Keen to follow the events, I requested him to allow me to accompany him to the prophetess if it was convenient for him which he agreed. During the meeting that we had with the prophetess I narrated my dream about Zan which she then interpreted as indicating that Zan was supposed to have been involved in an accident. She also hinted that the man who was grinning in the dream was in fact a *chikwambo* (air of the deceased raised by witches, also called a zombie in literature) which had been sent to cause harm to Zan's family. She also noted that the fact that Zan and his mother were walking in opposite directions in the dream meant that the *chikwambo* was intending to create a rift between Zan and his mother so that they would quarrel and then when illness and death struck in the family they would not assist one another. The prophetess advised that the *chikwambo* needed to be destroyed and removed from Zan's house so that his family would be well and he would not be involved in an accident when he travelled back to his workplace. She indicated Zan had to pay her some US\$10, 00 for removing the *chikwambo*.

Although generally prophets did not charge for their services, Zan, agreed to pay the prophetess before we headed back, that evening, to his homestead together with the prophetess and her husband. We went straight to his house where the ritual to catch the *chikwambo* was to be done. The prophetess sang for a while, prayed and then told everyone present including Zan's mother that the *chikwambo* was hiding in Zan's wife's bag in which she kept her clothes. She indicated that the bag which was in a separate house had to be brought. Zan's wife rushed and in a few minutes she returned with the bag in her hand. The prophetess then requested Zan to check if she and her husband had anything in their pockets which they might be suspected to use to

trick us. Quickly, Zan checked and confirmed that the prophetess and her husband did not have anything with which they could have played tricks. The prophetess then knelt down, prayed and fumbled in the bag. She brought out something wrapped in a red and white-stripped piece of cloth and then staggered around as if she was carrying something heavy. After some minutes she knelt down and requested those of us who wanted to have a look at the *chikwambo* to wash our faces with water which had been prayed for. The explanation for washing the faces with the water was that if we did not do so the *chikwambo* would render us blind as we looked at it. The *chikwambo* manifested as an assortment of snail, herbs and some beads all of which were burnt soon after the ritual.

There are a number of issues that I want to pull out of these dreams and experiences. The first is the ways in which things that were not actually present were sometimes deemed to have presence even in their absence. Thus in the case of Nod, she may be understood to have had presence in the dreams of the prophetess even though she was actually not present at the prophetess' house. Equally the people including the doll-like creatures that Mar dreamt chasing her might have had presence in her dreams without being actually present. And in my case Zan can be understood to have had presence in my dreams even though he was not actually present when I dreamt about him. This hints at a scenario in which things that are not physically available are not necessarily absent as is often assumed in epistemologies that would dismiss as inconsistent suggestions that a thing can be absent but nevertheless present and vice versa. If things are understood in terms of becomings in which they can be absent but present, that is in terms of their goings and comings, it arguably becomes easier to understand why among the villagers being absent is not necessarily an opposite of being present. During the fieldwork, I was asked by some of the villagers: "*Asi murikuchikoro?*" (Are you at school?), even though I was clearly with them in the villages and therefore not at any school. What this means is that it is possible for one to be present but absent and to be at different places at the same time. It implies that we can be present where we are absent and therefore that presence is not necessarily measured on the basis of being fixed to a place but rather in terms of comings and goings that make it possible to have presence in many places at the same time.

What this then presumes is a theory of presence in which there is not necessarily pure presence or pure absence. It presumes a theory of presence in which things have different ways of registering presence and absence. When the water is used as *munamoto* (prayer) it can be understood as registering its presence as a prayer rather than merely as water. When illness manifests in dreams in the form of violent creatures it can well be registering presence as a mode of oncoming violence revealed in the dreams. The challenge in such a context where things vacillate is to shift focus from analyzing things merely in terms of the mind to the various ways in which they come to be sensed as they come and go. The challenge is to avoid giving illness and associated violence a home either in the mind or in the social but to see them also in terms of their manifold comings and goings that come to be differentially sensed. It is a challenge to understand other things including dreams not merely as objects to be analysed and interpreted but as modes by which presence of other entities is actively registered in a world where being physically present in a particular space is not necessarily an imperative.

Apart from sensing the presence of things through dreams, villagers also relied on divination and prophecies which can be understood to have underscored the ways in which things, including illnesses, were connected to many different other kinds. My encounters with *n'anga* and prophets indicated that although they often noted particular things that engendered illnesses, they also stressed the connections between different kinds of things. In this sense what they underlined was not just the thing as an ontological object but the ways in which the thing was connected to many different things via their comings and goings. So contrary to scholarship that portrayed *n'anga* for instance as witchdoctors with principal briefs to identify witches (see for instance Jeater 2007, Gelfand 1964) my sense was that *n'anga* dealt more with sensing connections, often also harnessing them, and the comings and goings of things than with witches as discreet ontological entities. For instance during my participation in the churches, some illnesses were explained in terms of breaks in connections and flows rather than merely in terms of a witch being present in one's life. Madness and other forms of mischief, including witchcraft, for instance were often explained in terms of absence and to portray such absence villagers remarked: "*haana kukwana*" (literally he/she is not enough). In this sense "*kusakwana*" (being not enough) can be understood in terms of a lack of what is expected in the flow of life in the midst of

others rather than merely in terms of possessing malevolence. The idea of *kukwana* and *kusakwana* were also linked to way in which babies were treated with herbs in *chivanbu*. Geli, for instance, noted in an interview on 29 January 2011 that: *‘Pachivanbu vana vaitsengerwa kusvika kuma 1980s kuitira mudumbu (ruzoka). Kutsengerwa uku kunoita kuti munhu agarisike, adzikame. Kana asina kudzikama munhu anonzi hauna kutsengerwa uye hauna kukwana* (In *chivanbu* babies had herbs administered to them to prevent stomach problems called *ruzoka*. This administration of herbs makes one stable. If one has not had such herbs administered villagers say that one is not enough).

For the reason that some villagers who did mischief were considered to be not enough, those who were deemed to be witches were sometimes not harassed but they were invited and informed of their lack, and within the churches measures were prescribed to restore expected flows that is to render the individuals enough. Such invitation might well have been influenced by the criminalisation of witchcraft accusation since the colonial period but then since 2006, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act has decriminalised witchcraft accusation provided the healers and prophets can render evidence. This then suggests a mode of engagement that is not preoccupied merely with sensing things as discreet but rather sensing their comings and goings. If witchcraft is understood in terms of presences that are also absences, it becomes possible to conceive how a preoccupation with fixed, stable and objectively present things assists in missing the nuances in the comings and goings of everyday life. It is germane to follow up on the illness, and to contextualise it in matters of health, that struck me as hinted in chapter two.

The ways in which such nuances are often missed can best be exemplified by my own experiences during fieldwork from 2010 to 2011. At the beginning of the preliminary fieldwork which I did in June 2010, I visited one old man in the village. And during the visit, I attended a church service. Towards the end of the service the prophet in that church pointed at me and prophesied that I would experience acute pain in my feet at some point but for a reason he did not quite explain he noted that the illness would arrive in a summer season. According to the prophet, some *varoyi* (conventionally understood as witches) who were envious of me had gathered soil from my footprints, mixed it with herbs, needles and other substances. They then had placed the concoctions under cover on one path of which they knew I would walk.



When I met a *n'anga* towards the end of my fieldwork the *n'anga* threw some carved sticks down onto a reed mat as a form of diagnosis. The six sticks fell in different directions leaving gaps between them. Zviko, the *n'anga* that I interviewed and who did the diagnosis in December 2011 said, “*Muri kuvhurirwa mbepo* (someone is opening up space for the wind to get to you) and that is why your feet are painful”. She said it is because I had been trapped (*kutsikiswa*) so there was a need to *kutemerwa* (to have incision made and herbs rubbed in). “The *kutsikiswa* is causing pain in your back and in your chest. Some witch has put dirty stuff in your wife’s stomach and in her kidneys so she needs herbs to cleanse the dirt in the mornings because that is when she feels the pain. Some villagers and other people lie that *midzimu* and *Mwari* are separated. *Handizvo, midzimu na Mwari murume nemukadzi vari pamwechete* (that is not it, ancestors and God are wife and husband, they are together). My *midzimu* told me to continue attending church services within the Roman Catholic Church when I had briefly stopped attending the church services. You have been bewitched by three villagers who allege that “*unoonesa*” (you see too much of our secrets in the village)”.

Zviko’s diagnosis helps make sense of presence that is absence in that she noted that she was seeing the witches even in their absence when we were in her hut. It also helps to make sense of presence that is absence in the sense that my wife who she was talking about in her diagnosis was not with me: she was in the capital city of Harare about 200 km away. Her diagnosis also helps make sense of absences that are also presences in the sense that while she noted that the witches alleged that I was seeing too much of what they were doing in the village, I had little contact with the three villagers that she mentioned except when I met them during the day in the course of my fieldwork. Thus the *n'anga* helped me note various ways in which presence is made sense of even when a thing is not necessarily present. The presence of the illness when it was not present, the presence of the future when it was not present, my presence in the form of my footprints when I was not present and the presence of perforations in my feet even when the needles were not present all suggested modes of sensing where neither presence nor absence were deemed to be invariably pure.

Mindful of the fact that my illness resembled what Gelfand (1985: 32, 36) called a rheumatic state as well as what is known in vernacular as *chipotswa*, I needed to maintain the dialogue between the different ways of conceiving the illness open. I did not want to lose out by prematurely discarding other possible explanations.

What I was not happy about though was to characterize the illness merely as a rheumatic state when it appeared in many ways to be a process rather than a state. So for instance while Gelfand likens *chipotswa* to a rheumatic state the *chipotswa* is more of a process than a state. His other observation which underscores process is that with *chipotswa* the witch plants the poison on the victim's path so that when he steps on it or comes into contact with it, it enters his body within which it then circulates to other parts. The reason why I was not happy to conceive my illness as a state or condition was that it clearly had a history which could not have been discarded without impoverishing the diverse ways of sensing the presences of things. In everyday life where things are often characterized more by processes than by stasis, emphasizing states and conditions would have made me lose the nuances about how things become as well as their regimes of presences and absences.

My encounters with *n'anga* suggested that what matters in treatment is not necessarily the naming of an affliction whether as Gelfand above notes, as a rheumatic state or *chipotswa* because different names can be given to the same thing. Pombi noted this issue during my interview with him. I had an interview with Pombi on 30 January 2011 and he said, “*Unogona kupomerwa AIDS usina pane zvaitwa nevaroyi. Varoyi vave kuroya saizvozvo unoonda, unoshanduka ganda maDoctor oti tiri kushaya chirwere asi apa panenge pane mishonga inenge ichitokanganisa doctor iyeje kuti asakuonere. MaDoctor mamwe ave kuti zvinoda chivanhu?*”

*Varoyi vanokudyisa vanhu. Kudyiswa kweburoyi kudyiswa wakarara kana wakamuka. Kudyiswa nemukadzi kuti unye nemari yese. Umwe mukadzi anenge achinzenzereka odyisa murume kuitira kuti mitauro isawande. Kudyisa murume kutsvaga mishonga wobikwa nebhurukwa mvura yacho yobikiswa murivo netumidzi imwe ndeyekufukira, mukadzi anogara papoto utsi hwacho huchivira mupoto hunova hunozobikiswa zvamuchadya mese. Munhu anenge asiri mukati mazvo anoti chivanhu bakuna* (You can be considered to have AIDS when actually it will be witches' activities. Witches are now bewitching such that victims have symptoms like in AIDS or they do so in such a way that doctors will say they are failing to have diagnosis and this can be because the witches' activities will be interfering with the diagnosis. Some doctors now advise patients to consult *n'angas* in *chivanhu* way. Witches cause one to eat poisoned concoctions while one is asleep or they can poison one during day time in wakefulness. But other villagers are made to eat concoctions by their wives who will want their husbands to bring all the pay home.

Some of the wives make their husband eat concoctions because the wives will be engaging in adultery and so the herbs would render the husbands docile and reticent. The wives consult *n'anga* for herbs which they cook together with the wives' underwear. Some of the concoctions involve the wives squatting over a pot with steam which fall into the pot and is used to cook food that the husband and wife will eat together. Some people say that there is no *chivanhu* simply because they are not in it". Not much has been written about the *kudyiswa* but Gelfand (1985: 36) mentions it when he notes that *chidyiso*, which is the same as *kudyiswa*, is caused by ingestion of food that has been "bewitched". For Gelfand (1985) *chidyiso* is characterised by foreign bodies remaining stationary or moving in the alimentary canal of the victim. The poison is believed to have no immediate effect on the victim but the symptoms start to show after some weeks or even months. With all this about *chivanhu* and absent presences, it is necessary to turn back to key issues raised in this chapter.

### **A Return to a Few Key Issues about Presences and Absences**

The chapter has argued that surviving illness in everyday life involved navigating the terrains of biomedicine as well as those of prophets and healers. The ways in which these terrains were navigated depended on the kinds of material and nonmaterial presences that were sensed to show up and to promote or disrupt processes of treatment/wellness. It has been noted that some things such as soil, pebbles, strings and water are assumed to assume presence in the healing sessions not necessarily as the object that they appear to be but as *munamoto* once they are sanctified for use. In this sense human beings infuse agency into things some of which would be understood as natural in the kind of modernist understanding that Latour (1993, 2005) argues is founded on the nature-culture divide which is the basis of the "binaries between humans and nonhumans" (things such as animals, trees and other objects). To the extent that the healers and prophets render agency to the things which they then advise their patients to use they can be understood as rendering the binary between "nature-culture" fuzzy. Therefore the villagers' conceptions are that such objects are rendered via the intercession by human beings with agency as in the case of *munamoto*, for instance, when they have been prayed for. On the other hand, the conceptions that *mbepo* constitutes the nonmaterial presences

around materials objects underscore the need to consider not only the agency of material things but also the nonmaterial aspects of which they are parts.

Taking cues from Ingold's (2007, 2010, and 2011) argument, that there is need to start from the flows rather than from congealed objects, this chapter has privileged the nonmaterial things deemed to have presence in matters of health and illness. It has argued following Ingold that materials of different sorts with various and variable properties mix and meld with one another in the generation of things. The chapter has focused also on *mbepo* in so far as it was deemed to for instance interfere with doctor-patient interactions. But to extend on Ingold's argument about the ways in which things mix and meld with one another, I have looked at how in everyday life the presence of other things is sensed. In this way I have argued that things do not just mix and meld because there is also separation of things in rituals and in treatments for instance. So while Ingold emphasizes the mixing, melding and the becomings of things, this chapter has shown that there is much more than these issues in everyday life. In everyday life things become and also unbecome, things mix but they also unmix, so to speak. I have used the notion of hauntology to characterize the lack (which is not necessarily absence of) of settledness of such things in the kind of everyday life studied.

The switches from biomedical regimes to healers and prophets and vice versa can be understood to indicate such lack of settledness in the everyday life. The lack of faith in some medical diagnoses which some villagers such as Fatsi contested indicate the lack of settledness of matters of truth which are often assumed in conventional practices to be settled once tests are done. By switching from prophets and healers to medical institutions the villagers also indicated lack of trust in the modes of diagnoses and treatment that could otherwise be deemed to compete with or complement the medical provisions. What this implies is that the kind of truth that sometimes matters in everyday life is not necessarily formally given but rather located in the comings and goings of things or in the practices. Because it is truth that is partly lived on the basis of such comings and goings of things, it is not always readily available for conventional representation and for epistemologies founded on such formal representationalism.

Whereas the representationalist epistemologies are premised on an understanding of things in terms of subjects and objects in everyday life where things are understood in terms of comings and goings subject and

objects can not always be delimited as such. When villagers understand the *mbepo* to block the doctors' diagnosis they can be understood to be noting that during the processes it is not only the doctor and patient as subject and object that matter but that there are other things that render the subject–object divide not as neat and pure. When the villagers note the presence of other things manifesting in various kinds of materialities and as nonmaterial aspects they can be understood to be underscoring the possibility of things to have presence without becoming subjects or objects in the conventional sense. To have presence without necessarily registering in conventional objectivist ways of knowing as present is how some things in such everyday life may be characterized. But failure to register in a particular expected way as present does not necessarily imply being absent or nonexistent as is assumed in those representationalist epistemologies. The experiences I had with my illness indicate that things often have their ways of registering presence which may not be readily accessible to some senses. For this reason they may be subject to a variety of interpretations, which have different traction.

The chapter has shown that matters of senses and of what things have their presence are not invariably settled in everyday life as they appear to be in formal and institutional discourses. Bearing in mind the disparities in the senses and the aspects of sensing that are stressed (see also Serres 2008, Geurts 2002) one is persuaded in the light of this research to think that the domain of senses need retranslation in ways that would democratize the modes of engagement in the world. When villagers use the vernacular term *kunzwa* (literally to hear) not only to refer to the auditory senses but also in reference to bodily feelings they can be understood to be indicating the disparities in understanding senses in everyday life as well as in formal institutional renditions. The statement; “*ndanzwa kurwadziwa*” (literally, I have heard pain though it can also be read as I felt pain) underlines the different understandings of the sense of hearing. Equally when villagers use the terms *kuona* (literally to see) to refer not only to the sense of sight but also to the process of thinking such as in the phrases: “*ndaona kuti zvakakanaka*” (which can be read, I have seen it good or I have thought it good), they can be understood to be rendering different conceptualisations of senses from the institutional conventional. But as indicated in cases in this chapter, sometimes one is disallowed to see the things that make one ill though they may have other ways of sensing the presences of such things as heaviness, biting

pains and so forth. Equally although I did not see the needles that were allegedly used to cast illness on me, when I fell ill, I felt acute pricking pain as if needles were being pushed into my feet and after the treatment sessions my feet registered many small perforations the size of needles. The point here is to underline the fact that what often matters in everyday life is not necessarily to see the things that are deemed to have presence, it is often to sense the things in a broader way.

In the context of the shiftiness of things, the different ways of sensing presences and the nomadism in seeking health services, one notices the lack of settledness of facts about health matters. One senses that translation is never finished business in everyday life: it underlies the movements from one mode to the other, it underlies the modalities of sensing presences and it underlies the epistemic shifts that are suggested by the switches in modes of health provision. If such ongoingness of modes of translations is rendered central in researches on everyday life, it becomes possible to recognize why dichotomies are often not an enduring aspect. It becomes for instance possible to understand why a thing can be absent but present. In other words it becomes possible to reckon why things, including illnesses, often elude epistemological appropriation and representation even as their presences may be sensed.

When prophets and healers among the villagers note that: “*pane chiripo*” (there is something in presence), or *pane mambepe* (there are winds in presence) or *hapana chiripo* (there is nothing in presence) they can be understood to be alluding to things that come and go with illnesses and health. When such things are understood in terms of presences they suggest both temporal and spatial qualities and in this way they enable not only the histories of things but also ways in which they come to connect to be told. The presence is not necessarily registered via action but also via inaction. The commissions and omissions of the government which rendered the presence of constraints in health provisions would best exemplify the double-edgedness of presence. It is a kind of presence where things can have presence without necessarily acting such as in the case of my illness where the illness was foretold one and a half years before it struck. In other words the presence can not be understood merely in terms of becomings in Ingold’s sense but it can also be understood in terms of moments of convergence at which there is as much potential for unbecomings as there is for becomings.



## Conclusion

### ***Chivanhu* and Some Tenets of Relational Ontologies**

This thesis has shown that villagers survived violence via a number of everyday life modes of engagement including mukwerera or rain petitioning, relying on dreams, prophecies and divination, via *ukama*, through *kutenda* and via a variety of ways of sensing and knowing. These everyday life modes of engagement were not invariably opposed to “modern” modes of engagement such as weather forecasts that villagers also relied on. The everyday life modes of engagements involving sensing and knowing were also not opposed to “modern” modes of knowing and sensing and acquiring information such as using cellphones and radios, for instance, to share information at a distance about violence. The thesis therefore argues that *chivanhu*, that encapsulates the modes of engagement by the villagers, is not invariably steeped in dichotomies.

Though *chivanhu* has been portrayed as tradition and consigned to the past as a mode of engagement, it speaks to connections between temporalities, spaces, things and beings. While the Enlightenment Euro-modernity portrayed time simply in terms of linearity of past, present and future, in *chivanhu* time is lived not merely diachronically or synchronically but also in terms of simultaneities that do not invariably occasion distinctions between temporalities. Because in *chivanhu* there is recognition of these temporalities, the underlying implication is that *chivanhu* is not inimical to change but as the medium indicated with respect to reconciliation noted in chapter three, change is engaged in with the consultation of elders (*vakuru*) and in terms of evaluations in the light of existing values and norms.

The modes of relating in *chivanhu* as indicated in *ukama* include connections between the visible/invisible realms, the realms for instance of human beings and of *midzimu* (ancestors) understood as manifesting in the form of *mbepo/mweya* as resident in *Nyikadzimu* though visiting human beings from time to time. They also include connections between the near/ the far deemed for instance to be interlinked through *mweya/mbepo* which are relied upon in divination, dreaming and prophecy. But the connections in *ukama* are also defined in terms of material exchanges such as means of survival, blood, and by other things such as language that help



bridge difference. The different forms of relating in *chivanhu* underscore the multifacetedness of relations that are relied upon in struggles for survival. Wildman's contention that there is a variety of relations, differently valued, that need consideration in relational ontologies is vindicated in *ukama*.

Much as different scholars have emphasised different ways of relating whether through Ingold's (2010, 2011) meshworks or through Latour's Actor-Networks or through animism in some parts of the world (de Castro 2004, Bird-David 1999, Descola 1996), in the everyday life in Buhera villagers conceived different forms of relations that were differently valued. Healers and mediums emphasised connections via *midzimu*/ancestors also understood as *mweya/mhepo*, while prophets and church members emphasised direct connections with *Mwari* (God). These different forms of relating as well as different values attached to relations indicate ways in which relations are subject to value judgments depending of context and time. But these value judgments also pertain to different ways in which the entities themselves are valued. Healers and mediums for instance allow their bodies to be entered by their deceased *hama* who manifest as *midzimu* but bodies deemed to have been entered by *ngozi* aggrieved dead are held by healers to require exorcism. Similarly, prophets of apostolic churches allow their bodies to be entered by the Holy Spirit: they shun possession by *midzimu* as well as by *ngozi*. The villagers ways of relating with *mweya/mhepo* show selectivity and complex processes of inclusion and exclusion much in the same way as some scholars have noted (Nyamnjoh 2005) in the global world flows and circulation of information and capital goods is marked by intensification, building and rebuilding of boundaries.

The flights by villagers from scenes of violence and from violent relations indicate that while some relations are important in surviving violence, other relations that pose danger to the individuals are shunned. The flights by individuals from violence indicate the preferences of individual lives (as substantive entities) over the kind of relational ontologies that render primacy to relations rather than to substantive entities. The arguments in relational ontologies that relations have primacy over substantive entities (Wildman 2006, Inwagen 2011, Paul n.d) legitimise the marginalisation of the lives of the individuals as substantive entities (in preference for relations) yet it is often the individuals who generate and sustain relations. In other words rendering primacy to relations rather than to substantive entities runs the risk of violating the integrity and

senses of personhood/self of the individuals who provided accounts of the relations in the first instance. To argue that substantive entities have no essence or own being would in fact be to legitimate the violence against others thereby considered to be of no essence: it would be to legitimate the murders and other offences against individuals who were being victimised. In any case in *chivanbu* human beings for instance are deemed to have own being and essence as underscored in accounts where the *mweya/mbepe* of the murdered were deemed to return to avenge. In this instance the *mbepe/mweya* as the essence of individuals is deemed to survive physical death and to constitute the phenomenon of *ngozi* that is held in *chivanbu* as rendering it risky to harm others.

It may well be possible to contest the “reality” of such phenomena as *ngozi* on the basis of Enlightenment rationalism which as Davies (2007: 7) argues sought to put an end to the phenomena of spirits and ghosts even if what the rationalist only managed to do was to displace and internalise the world of spirits into the realm of psychology. Interpreting God as immanent in “nature” as was done during the Enlightenment could have helped ease arguments about rationalism but in *chivanbu*, phenomena such as *ngozi* (see also Reynolds 1996, Schmidt 1997, Gelfand 1959, Bourdillon 1979) underscore different modes of engagement to the Enlightenment one. Since it was part of the Enlightenment Eighteenth century rationalism that “nature” became a polite word for God deemed immanent, in the deism of that century (Evensky 2005), questioning modernist epistemologies involves questioning such ideas of immanence. The ideas of immanence appear to underpin notions of animism that were often attributed by scholars even to contexts with different cosmologies (Opoku 1978, Stanner 2005, Rattray 1927, 1969, Fontein 2006).

In the context of *chivanbu*, there are indications that villagers did not animate objects and that they did not treat everything as animate, in the same way as human beings. Some entities and places including mountains, rivers, waterfalls and animals were considered to be the abode of or manifestations of *midzimu* for instance but they were not considered to be the *midzimu*. Rather the *mweya/mbepe* of the *midzimu* was deemed to attach to, rest or manifest in/on the features. Even though *Mwari* was deemed to manifest in some particular mountains, caves and other things, He was not considered to have become the features or the things through which He manifested his presence. Whereas animism and the considerations of God as immanent in “nature”

would suggest pantheism or polytheism, in *chivanhu* there is recognition of God as the one Supreme Being as is clear in the various names for God such as *Nyadenga*/owner of Heavens, *Musiki*/creator, *Wekumusorosoro*/the one who ranks highest, *Musikavanhu*/ creator of human beings. In this sense there is, in *chivanhu*, evidence of ranking or hierarchy of things and beings that also relate or connect with one another.

Although *midzimu*/ancestors and *Mwari* are deemed to have shrines not every feature of the environment constitutes a shrine: there are selected places and features that are deemed to be shrines or places where villagers hold they can interact with ancestors and God on ritual occasions. Such places can be understood as liminal spaces where in Fontein's (2006: 88) terms the worlds of human beings and those of ancestors share temporal and spatial dimensions. But the worlds that share spaces in everyday life are not merely the human and the ancestral worlds but everyday village life is also punctuated and impacted upon by other places outside the context of the villages. The ways in which food aid arrived and was distributed in village life indicated ways in which worlds were interwoven. The ways in which commodities and other remittances circulated in the villages in the context of economic and political challenges underscored ways in which everyday village life could be understood in terms of liminal spaces in which commodities from different places, even currencies from different places circulated. It is in reckoning such liminality of the everyday life that I have sought to understand the modes of engagement in terms of hauntology. Derived from Derrida's (1993, 2006) argument about a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence and as a place where we can interrogate our relation with the dead, examine illusive identities of the living, explore boundaries between thought and unthought, hauntology has been extended in this dissertation to include visitations by social figures and the ramifications of media ideologies in everyday life. But in the light of ways in which citizens in the diaspora remitted money and commodities, hauntology in this dissertation is not understood merely as deconstructive figures but also as constructive figures that helped to make life possible during the economic and political challenges in the country. Hauntology in this sense is also understood in terms of Gordon's (2004: 24-5, 2012: 1) argument that it is that instance of the "merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present into the making of worldly relations and into our accounts of the worlds". Though Gordon's argument is important in understanding hauntology,

in the context of everyday life struggles to survive violence, what mattered for the villagers was not necessarily world making or making accounts of the world but survival in their context. In other words hauntology as understood in *chivanhu* is not about world making because there are many worlds that are conceived, it is about opening up oneself to possibilities of survival or closing down possibilities of trouble. It is in this sense that villagers made value judgements about what relations and substantive entities they could engage in the context of threats to survival.

Hauntology as understood in the context of this thesis encompasses ways in which villagers were visited by spectres of violence, by the violent others, by the *mbepo/mweya* and indeed by other villagers with whom they shared material means of survival as well as *ruzwi*. In this sense hauntology does not presuppose that the entity that is haunted is always amenable to haunting as indeed there are also abatements and (fore) closures including flights from possibilities of being haunted. Connections via *mbepo/mweya*, as clear in the experiences of healers and mediums, where the *mweya/mbepo* possess them, and release them after the divination sessions indicate that hauntings are temporal as much as they are, at least, more frequent with particular beings, entities and spaces. This temporality and spatiality of hauntology makes it possible, in everyday village life, for villagers to also go about their lives without invariably presuming that everything around them is animate.

So it is mainly healers, mediums, prophets as liminal persons and liminal places or features where worlds were deemed to share space and temporality that appeared to be more open to the connections with others. While other scholars like Lan (1986) argued that it was deemed dangerous in colonial Zimbabwe for mediums to wear western style clothes, eat factory produced food, smoke cigarettes and use western medicine, mediums and healers among the villagers I studied used items such as mobile phones, solar panels, fertilizer and radios. As Lan (1989) argued, mediums were not opposed to everything modern, as they accepted money which they and the *mbondoro* could claim, but to highly priced goods, extortionate prices. The relaxation of taboos against the western items after the war of liberation in the 1980s (Lan 1986) indicates that the mediums opposition to the items were accounted for by their opposition to the colonial state but in other places *mbondoro* also allowed mediums to use the western items including riding on buses and wearing trousers (Bourdillon 1987).

The significance placed on *mweya/mhepo* in *chivanhu* underscores the role of fluidity and flows, however limited in other ways. But connections via the *mhepo/mweya* as indicated in the chapter on petitioning for rain appear to be more labile than what is presumed in notions such as rainmaking, or what Tsing (2000) calls “worldmaking”. Though other scholars like Latour (2005) have presented an approach intended to bridge the “nature-culture” divide, by conceiving both humans and nonhumans as actants (that deploy action), in *chivanhu* differences/distinctions are not bridged merely by actions as indeed some actions can widen differences. It is more importantly the values (including moral and ethical) attached to particular actions that influence whether or not particular actions widen or narrow divisions. Being premised on orature, with stress on verbal utterances such as during performance of rituals of *kukumbira* and *kutenda*, differences in *chivanhu* are also bridged.

The reliance by villagers on *Nyikadzimu* and other worlds of *mweya/mhepo* underscore the fact that what matters in everyday life is not merely the global but the ways in which different worlds play out together. For villagers conceiving the *Nyikadzimu* as inhabited by *midzimu* that are deemed to be wiser and richer than human beings, the implication is that everyday life can not be understood merely in terms of the conventional classifications of worlds as developed and underdeveloped. But in the light of the implications of the existence of different worlds to which villagers in *chivanhu* resort to, it can be argued that the reference points in *chivanhu* is not merely to the global but to different worlds as conceived in the quotidian. The interconnections between these worlds including between the entities that are conceived to originate from them has been understood in terms of hauntology. This hauntology is not merely about flows but in it there are also blockages and other modes of mobility and manifestations, not restricted to flows and becomings. In this sense, the alternations between presence and absence of entities including NGO’s in the villages, the alternations between moments when food was available and when it was not, and the fact that not all villagers were included on donors’ lists of beneficiaries indicate the inadequacy of explaining life merely in terms of flows. Hauntology is also about the duplicities of everyday life, the overt and covert modes of resistances as well as covert ways of offending, of deconstruction as well as (re)construction as exemplified by the violence and efforts to reconstruct society in the villages. Because, in hauntology, entities sometimes manifest in the

bodies of others, hauntology cannot be understood narrowly in terms of becomings but also about manifesting and manifestations (as much as it is about resisting these manifestings) in bodies of others, even if surreptitiously. Becomings and manifestations, as evident in the everyday life of the villagers need not be conflated because it is sometimes failure to become or to realise aspirations that one manifests in another entity. The cases of *ngozi* manifesting in the bodies of living human beings is explicable in terms of the life force of the deceased having been terminated prematurely or in terms of that deceased not having been paid due credits during lifetime. Equally the fact that some villagers retaliated by manifesting as ghosts and secretly poisoning cattle belonging to opponents who had confiscated their livestock underscored the difference between becomings and manifestings. When one's way is blocked, one fails to become and it is often at such junctures that one can manifest often surreptitiously in another form. These observations notwithstanding, it can also be argued on the contrary that some manifestations such as by *mweya mutsvene*, by the *mbondoro* and *midzimu* underscore not failure to become, at least in the eyes of some villagers, but victory, or successful struggles against, or over finitude.

Hauntology hints at the need to avoid forms of conflation such as those that conflated ancestors with demons or evil spirits (see for instance Comaroff and Comaroff 2005), but the modes of engagement among the villagers also indicates the need not to conflate ancestors and *Mwari* with features in the environment, some of which they use as vehicles to exert influence in the human world, particularly in terms of the notions of immanence. In this sense *vadzimu* as conceived among the villagers are neither conflatable with living human beings, who they also use as vehicles or mediums, nor with features of the environment, that can be conceived as nonhumans. In the same way it is an offence among the villagers to call a human being a dog or a baboon, as indicated in chapter three, it is deemed to be an offence to address a *mudzimu* as a dog or a baboon or such other animal. As indicated in chapter three the *mbondoro* said, during the interview I had with him, that there were also *vanhu* who also brew beer in the *Nyikadzimu* (also addressed in some churches as *Goredema*) where he was coming from. Contrary to conventional understandings of *vadzimu* as belonging to the past, there are indications among the villagers that they were deemed to be ahead of living human beings. The basis for consulting *vadzimu* is the Shona proverb that, “*Nzira inobvunzwa varimberu*” (paths/directions are

asked from those who are ahead not from those who are behind). This is to say that ancestors were ahead of their descendants when conceived as coming into the human world from *Nyikadzimu* and the same ancestors were ahead of living human beings when conceived as going back, ahead of their descendants, to the *Nyikadzimu* so they are deemed to know both the human world and *Nyikadzimu* much better than living human beings/descendants behind them. In this rendering what are past are the ancestors' buried bodies and bones but not their *mweya/mhepo* that is deemed to continue interacting with the living not from a position of pastness but the futureness of the *midzimu*.

Though ancestors have been understood by some scholars in terms of “bones that rise again “and other natural features (Fontein 2010), there is need to exercise care not to, at least always conflate ancestors with materialities that they temporarily attach themselves to, from time to time. This is to say that there is need to exercise caution not to over rely on naturalised (see Chakravartty 2013) or scientific metaphysics in interpreting nonnaturalised metaphysical aspects of *chivanhu*. The risk in misinterpreting *chivanhu* in terms of naturalised metaphysics is that there could be a continuation of the earlier portrayals of such modes of engagement like *chivanhu*, in terms of the worship of nature yet in *chivanhu* there are distinctions drawn between on the one hand the “natural”/material items and, on the other hand *vadzimu* and *Mwari*. Thus the nearness of *vadzimu* and *Mwari* to the human world at certain times and places in *chivanhu* has some parallels with what some scholars such as Tacey (2003) call new spirituality but contrary to the new spirituality *chivanhu* appears not to deny the existence of heaven (*denga*) and *Nyadenga* (God as residing in heaven). Also in *chivanhu*, unlike in the new spirituality, at least in Tacey's (2003) sense, there are mediators and mediums between *vadzimu* and *vanhu* and between *vanhu* and *Mwari*, in *chivanhu*.





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